PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
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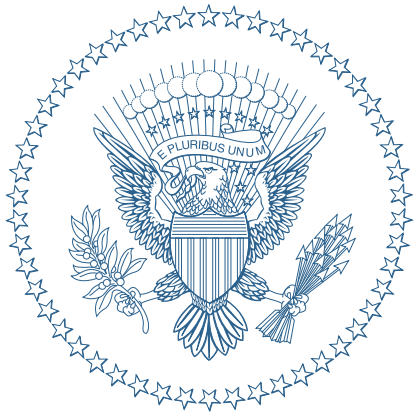
PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2013

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK II—JULY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

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Foreword

America marked two great milestones during the latter half of 2013: the 150th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's immortal words on the fields of Gettysburg, defining our American experiment as "a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that 'all men are created equal'"; and 50 years since civil rights activists marched on Washington and laid their claim to that founding ideal.

We spent the second half of this year focused on rebuilding the cornerstones of the American middle class. Job security, with good wages and durable industries. A good education. A home to call your own. Affordable health care when you get sick. A secure retirement even if you're not rich. The promise that through hard work and sacrifice, you can get ahead.

Unfortunately, our progress toward creating a better bargain for the middle class was interrupted when Republicans in the Congress instigated the first Government shutdown in more than 17 years. The shutdown hurt our economy, disadvantaged our families, and damaged our credibility around the world. For more than 2 weeks, I devoted my energy to reopening the Government as soon as possible, and I was pleased when Democrats and responsible Republicans came together to put Federal employees back to work and avoid America's first default in more than 200 years. In the wake of this manufactured crisis, the American people were fed up with partisan brinksmanship in Washington. I redoubled my efforts to find willing partners wherever I could, and by the end of the year, I signed a bipartisan budget agreement that replaced a portion of the across-the-board spending cuts known as "the sequester."

This fall we also rolled out the Affordable Care Act's Health Insurance Marketplace, which allowed Americans to compare plans and shop for affordable health insurance. While problems with the Healthcare.gov website initially prevented many people from signing up, my Administration moved quickly to repair them, and within 2 months of its launch, the site was working well for the vast majority of users. Thanks to the Marketplace and the expansion of Medicaid, millions of Americans gained the peace of mind that comes with having health coverage.

These 6 months brought tragedy, but we drew strength from our loss. In the wake of a terrible shooting at the Washington Navy Yard that took 12 innocent lives, we recognized the unheralded work of quiet patriots. After a devastating typhoon struck the Philippines, the global community rallied to provide relief and life-saving aid. And as we mourned the loss of former South African President Nelson Mandela, we recalled our power—through united action and shared ideals—to build a freer, more just world.

Those ideals were challenged when, in the increasingly brutal Syrian civil war, the regime of Bashar al-Assad carried out the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century, massacring many Syrians. It was a clear violation of international norms, an assault on our common humanity, and a threat to our national security. I asked the Congress to authorize limited, targeted military action against Syrian regime targets, but remained committed to exhausting all diplomatic options. In part because of pressure from the United States, the Syrian regime agreed to the peaceful elimination of its chemical weapons stockpile and joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. As my Administration continued working with the international community to ensure that Syria met its obligations, we also took an important step toward a comprehensive resolution regarding Iran's nuclear program. While significant obstacles remain, these breakthroughs set us on a path toward a safer, more peaceful future.

At the close of a year of challenge and hard-fought progress, I am reminded that there is no test our Nation cannot meet. When we recognize that our divisions pale in comparison to the strength of our common ideals, when we accept our obligations to one another and future generations—for the United States of America, no task is too difficult and no odds are too steep.

Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period July 1–December 31, 2013. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless otherwise indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of John Hyrum Martinez, Director of the Publications and Services Division, Office of the Federal Register. The

series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit, Laurice A. Clark, Supervisor. The Chief Editor of this book was Joseph K. Vetter; the Managing Editor was Joshua H. Liberatore, assisted by Amelia E. Otovo.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Publishing Office under the direction of Herbert H. Jackson, Jr., Acting Deputy Director and Chief Administrative Officer.

Oliver A. Potts
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

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Secretary of State	John F. Kerry
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Secretary of Defense	Charles T. Hagel
Attorney General	Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior	Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Penny S. Pritzker
Secretary of Labor	Seth D. Harris, Acting Thomas E. Perez (confirmed July 18)
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Secretary of Transportation	Anthony R. Foxx
Secretary of Energy	Ernest J. Moniz
Secretary of Education	Arne Duncan
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Homeland Security	Janet A. Napolitano (resigned September 6) Jeh C. Johnson (confirmed December 16)
Chief of Staff	Denis R. McDonough
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Robert Perciasepe, Acting Regina McCarthy (confirmed July 18)
United States Trade Representative	Michael B. Froman

Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Alan B. Krueger (resigned August 1) Jason L. Furman (confirmed August 1)
United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations	Samantha Power (confirmed August 1)
Administrator of the Small Business Administration	Karen G. Mills (resigned September 1) Jeanne Hulit, Acting

Administration of Barack Obama

2013

The President's News Conference With President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
July 1, 2013

President Kikwete. Your Excellency, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America: Mr. President, let me once again welcome you and the U.S. First Lady and your entire delegation to Tanzania.

I thank you, Mr. President, for accepting my invitation to visit Tanzania. The people of Tanzania love you. [*Laughter*]

You have seen the outpouring of warmth. There has never been a visit by a head of state to Tanzania that has attracted such big crowds like the one—the first one of its kind. Thank you for coming.

Mr. President, Tanzania and the United States enjoy an excellent relationship. We see eye to eye on many regional and global issues. We have been receiving invaluable support in our development endeavors. The lives of the people of Tanzania are different today thanks in many ways to the support we've been getting from the United States of America: support in health care, support in education. And health care has made many people, many lives to be saved. In education, many young men and women of Tanzania are getting an education.

Support in food security, in nutrition security is increasingly building Tanzania's capacity for self-sufficiency and food supply. And we're already getting there with regards to rice.

Support in infrastructure development, in the road sector, in electricity, in the water sector has made many Tanzanians get these services, which otherwise they would not have been getting them. We applaud programs like the Millennium Challenge Compact, PEPFAR against HIV/AIDS, and malaria. And your own brainchild, Feed the Future, Partnership for Growth, New Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security, these have proven to be very useful in supporting the development efforts.

Mr. President, we had very fruitful discussions today. We discussed many issues of mutual interest and mutual concern. Again, I will say, President, thank you for coming. And your words of support during the official talks and readiness to continue to support Tanzania in our development endeavors goes a long way towards assuring us: In you, and in the United States, we have a true friend indeed.

Mr. President, welcome.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Thank you. Well, thank you so much, President Kikwete, for your very kind words and for the incredible welcome that I've received here in Dar es Salaam. This is my first visit to Tanzania, but I feel a special connection to this country. Obviously, my family is from—on my father's side is from East Africa. They spent some time actually in Tanzania. And so the love Michelle and I and the girls have felt on our arrival, I want to ensure you that love is reciprocated and given back in return. So *habari zenu*.

Now, President Kikwete was the first African leader I welcomed to the White House after I took office. I was pleased to welcome him to Washington last year for the launch of our New Alliance on Food Security. And as the President indicated, we had excellent discussions today. Our visits and work together reflect the long relationship between our countries and our shared commitment to the development and the dignity of the people of Tanzania.

My visit comes on the 50th anniversary of a key moment in our relationship, when President Kennedy welcomed to the White House the father of your nation, President Julius Nyerere. Tanzania was one of the first countries to welcome the Peace Corps. That spirit of friendship continues. Tanzania is a close partner, as the President indicated, on almost all our major development initiatives. And this reflects our confidence in the people of Tanzania that, with the right steps, Tanzania has the

potential to unlock new economic growth not only in this country, but all across East Africa.

For example, Tanzanians continue to work to strengthen their democracy. Parliament, opposition groups, civil society groups, and journalists are all doing their part to advance the good governance and transparency upon which democracy and prosperity depend.

And I want to commend President Kikwete on your reform efforts to strengthen institutions, improve the delivery of basic services, and make government more responsive to the Tanzanian people. And I also want to salute you and President Shein of Zanzibar and the Tanzanian people for embarking on a vital constitutional process that will determine the future of this nation and its democracy.

Now, President Kikwete and I agreed to keep tackling the hurdles of greater economic growth, starting with the sector where the vast majority of Tanzanians work, and that's in the agricultural sector. As has been mentioned, our Feed the Future program has allowed us to work together to help more than 14,000 farmers here to better manage their crops and increase their yields by almost 50 percent. That means higher incomes and a ladder for families and communities to greater prosperity. And we're very proud of the work we've done with the Tanzanian Government.

We discussed the importance of creating opportunities for Tanzanian youth, and I'm hopeful that young men and women here will apply for the new fellows program that I've announced this week so that we can partner with them as we seek new ways to serve, working with young people, their communities, and to help them start new companies and create new jobs.

I want to congratulate Tanzania on nearing completion of the largest Millennium Challenge Compact in the world, which has benefited millions of Tanzanians with new roads and improved access to water and electricity. And Tanzania is also one of the first four countries selected for our Partnership for Growth, and its investments in key areas—new and improved roads, reforms to the energy sector—that can help lift people out of poverty and unlock economic growth.

And I'm also pleased that Tanzania is going to be one of the first participants in the new effort that I announced yesterday, Power Africa, with its goal of doubling access to electricity. This will mean more reliable and affordable electricity for more Tanzanians, and it's something that we want to spread all across the continent. Later today, I'll be announcing another initiative to improve trade with and within Africa, starting here with the East African Community.

On health, we're going to continue our efforts, which are saving lives. Here in Tanzania, we're working together; we've seen dramatic decreases in malaria and child deaths in part because of the support that we've been able to provide. Fewer people are being infected with HIV, more people are being treated. We're reaching more than 1.2 million Tanzanians with care and support through PEPFAR, including more than 500,000 vulnerable children and orphans. So we're going to keep up that fight.

Regionally, I thanked President Kikwete for Tanzania's contribution to security, including its peacekeepers in Darfur and the Congo. On the Congo, we agreed that all parties need to implement their commitments under the framework for peace, that armed groups need to lay down their arms and human rights abusers need to be held accountable. And I very much want to commend President Kikwete, as well, for the leadership role that he's played in the Southern African Development Community on the issue of Zimbabwe. We agree that the threats and intimidation of citizens are unacceptable and must stop and that further reforms are needed to create the conditions for free, fair, and credible elections that will put Zimbabwe on a path of success and prosperity.

And finally, we discussed an issue that's inseparable from Africa's identity and prosperity, and that's its wildlife. Tourists from around the world, including the United States, come here—especially to Tanzania—to experience its natural beauty and its national parks, and that's obviously an important part of the econo-

my of this country. But poaching and trafficking is threatening Africa's wildlife, so today I issued a new Executive order to better organize U.S. Government efforts in this fight so that we can cooperate further with the Tanzanian Government and others. And this includes additional millions of dollars to help countries across the region build their capacity to meet this challenge, because the entire world has a stake in making sure that we preserve Africa's beauty for future generations.

So again, Mr. President, thank you so much for your leadership and for your commitment to the partnership between our two nations. We've covered a lot of ground today. One last point I need to make, and that is, the President and I are both basketball fans. We did not discuss Hasheem Thabeet, who plays in the NBA, but maybe next time we'll have a chance to talk about that. [*Laughter*] So *asante*. *Asante sana*.

Tanzania/U.S. Foreign Aid/Millennium Challenge Corporation

Moderator. Excellencies, thank you very much for your excellent remarks. And now, with your permission, I'll open the floor to the media. As mentioned earlier, whoever asks his question need to identify himself or herself. Tell us your name, your affiliation, and ask your question. The floor is open. Peter.

Q. Your Excellencies, my name is Peter Ambilikile from Jambo Leo newspaper. My question is from both of you, starting with President Obama. President Obama, are you satisfied with the aid that your country provides to Tanzania, especially the MCC? Second question goes to President Kikwete. Do you believe that U.S. aid is doing enough to support our country, Tanzania? That's all, thanks.

President Obama. Well, not only do I think that what we're doing is important, but we have proof that U.S. assistance is making a difference. Because of our programs, you've reduced incidence of malaria. Because of our programs, you've reduced child and infant mortality. Because of our programs, there are roads that are being built here; farmers are seeing crops with better yields and are better able to get them to market because of new roads.

The MCC, I think, has been so successful here in Tanzania that phase one is near completion, and I know that Tanzania is going to be eligible for applying for phase two. And when it comes to Power Africa, the new program that I'm announcing, I think there's enormous potential here in Tanzania to start getting electricity out into villages in rural areas, more reliable service that can then power manufacturing, power new businesses, which creates more jobs, creates more demand. And we can do it using clean energy and not just some of the traditional sources.

Now, what I would say is—and I've said this throughout Africa—now we are looking at a new model that's based not just on aid and assistance, but on trade and partnership. And increasingly, what we want to do is use whatever monies that we're providing to build capacity. So we don't want to just provide the medicine, we want to help build the health infrastructures that allow Tanzanians to improve their overall health systems.

We don't want to just provide food, we want to increase food self-sufficiency. When it comes to power, we're not just building power plants ourselves, we're working with the various governments that are involved to think about what are the laws and regulations that are required to sustain it and how do we leverage the private sector to put more money in. So for—we're coming up with 7, 8 billion dollars of U.S. Government money on our Power Africa program, but we're also already obtaining about $9 billion worth of commitments from the private sector.

So, ultimately, the goal here is for Africa to build Africa for Africans. And our job is to be a partner in that process, and Tanzania has been one of our best partners.

President Kikwete. I think the issue of satisfied with MCC should have come—should have been asked me. MCC has been a great assistance from the United States Government to the people of Tanzania. There are three sectors here.

There is the road sector. And a good thing about the MCC is that we decide on the areas or the sectors that we need assistance. But even we decide on where. For example, in the case of roads, there are roads that we have spoken—we've talked to many donors who are not ready to support us. But when you said there is going to be support on roads, I said, let's try these roads. Let's see what the Americans are going to say. The Americans said, fine, if you think you need these roads, fine, we'll give you the money.

Those Tanzanians, fellow Tanzanians know Namtumbo, Songea, Binga, Tunduma, Sumbawanga, Tanga, Horo Horo, the roads in the Pemba. But we chose those roads, because these roads are actually in our breadbasket areas. This is where we get the corn: Ruvuma, Rukwa, Mbeya. We decided—we chose the U.S. to assist us to increase water supply to Dar es Salaam. It was our decision. The project is now being implemented. With our electricity, we said one of our biggest problems is access to electricity for people in the rural areas. The U.S. said, fine. We have a grid of 10 regions in Tanzania. Coverage of electricity has increased from 10 percent to 21 percent. It's phenomenal increase.

So I want to underscore the fact that I'm satisfied with the support from MCC. Is the U.S. doing enough? The U.S. has done a lot. But if I say they have done enough, then the President will not listen to my new requests. [*Laughter*] But so far, so good. [*Laughter*]

Death from malaria have—has declined by over 50 percent. Infant mortality rates have declined. HIV infections have declined. Through the PMTCT, Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission, more children borne by HIV-infected mothers are born free of the disease.

More people now—the U.S. has supported us with over 2 million books. And today I asked the President, we want another 2 or 4 million. He says, you talk to our—and I have seen from their faces that they are in agreement with the President. [*Laughter*] But so that when it comes to science and mathematics books, we'll have every Tanzanian child have a book of his or her own, instead of the ratios they are talking today, 5 to 1, now reduced to 3 to 1. So the list is endless. We have a lot of support. We are very appreciative; we are really very thankful. It has really helped change the lives of our people. But if they can do more, please. [*Laughter*]

Egypt/Former President George W. Bush/President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. The first question from the American press corps is Jonathan Karl of ABC.

Q. Mr. President, President Kikwete, thank you very much. Mr. President, these scenes in Egypt suggest that Muhammad Mursi and his Muslim Brotherhood Government have lost the support of the Egyptian people. When we saw similar protesting against Mubarak, you called on Mubarak to step down. By all accounts, these protests are even bigger. So my question is, is it time for Mursi to go? And does any of this cause you to reconsider the hundreds of millions of dollars—even billions of dollars—in aid the United States gives Mursi's Government?

And, President Kikwete, if I can ask you—and actually both of you—to comment on the significance of President Obama's trip here to Africa and the fact that tomorrow we will see, in what I believe is a first, two U.S. Presidents, President Bush and President Obama, together in a public appearance here in Tanzania.

President Obama. Obviously, we're all concerned about what's happening in Egypt, and we've been monitoring it very closely. Our commitment to Egypt has never been around any particular individual or party. Our commitment has been to a process. And when I took a position that it was time for Egypt to transition, it was based on the fact that Egypt had not had democratic government for decades, if ever. And that's what the people were calling for.

They went through an election process that, by all accounts, were legitimate. And Mr. Mursi was elected. And the U.S. Government's attitude has been, we would deal with a democratically elected Government. What we've also said is that democracy is not just about elections, it's also about how are you working with

an opposition; how do you treat dissenting voices; how do you treat minority groups. And what is clear right now is that although Mr. Mursi was elected democratically, there's more work to be done to create the conditions in which everybody feels that their voices are heard and that the Government is responsive and truly representative.

And so what we've encouraged the Government to do is to reach out to the opposition and work through these issues in a political process. It's not the U.S. job to determine what that process is. But what we have said is, go through processes that are legitimate and observe rule of law.

Now, obviously, we've been watching these big protests. Our number-one priority has been making sure that our Embassies and consulates are protected. Number two, what we've consistently insisted on is that all parties involved—whether it's members of Mr. Mursi's party or the opposition—that they remain peaceful. And although we have not seen the kind of violence that many had feared so far, the potential remains there, and everybody has to show restraint.

I should add, by the way, we have seen many reports of women being assaulted in these protests. And for those who are participating in these protests or marches, assaulting women does not qualify as peaceful protests.

So we're going to continue to work with all parties inside of Egypt to try to channel this through legal, legitimate processes. But I do think that if the situation is going to resolve itself for the benefit of Egypt over the long term, then all the parties there have to step back from maximalist positions. Democracies don't work when everybody says, it's the other person's fault and I want 100 percent of what I want.

And the good thing about the United States and other mature democracies is, you work through processes that force compromise, and those get institutionalized. But look, we've had 200-plus years of practice at it. This is still new in Egypt. And so they're going to have to work through these things. The key is making sure that they don't work through them in a violent fashion. But our position has always been, it's not our job to choose who Egypt's leaders are. We do want to make sure that all the voices are heard and it's done in a peaceful way.

I know you directed the question to President Kikwete, but my appearance with President Bush tomorrow—and I know the First Lady is going to be seeing Laura Bush—I think this is just another opportunity for me to reiterate what I said in South Africa yesterday when we were at an HIV/AIDS clinic that has saved lives because of the U.S. PEPFAR program that President Bush started. I think this is one of his crowning achievements.

Because of the commitment of the Bush administration and the American people, millions of people's lives have been saved. Antiretroviral drugs have been made available to people who didn't have them before, and they, even if they were infected with the disease, could look forward to a decent life. Children have been able to avoid infection because of that work. And we've continued that work, and we are going to continue that work.

One thing I do think is worth mentioning is that there's been some suggestion that somehow we've reduced our commitment there. The fact of the matter is, is that we are serving four times the number of people today than we were when PEPFAR first began. But because we've gotten better at it and more efficient at it, we're doing it at reduced costs, and then we're not taking that money out of global health. What we're doing is we're putting it back into things like tuberculosis and malaria alleviation, which is making sure that more people's lives are saved because HIV/AIDS is not the only disease that is affecting people here in Africa. And you have public health crises in some of these other areas as well.

But this indicates how timely the PEPFAR program was. And the bipartisan support that it has received has been extraordinary, and President Bush deserves enormous credit for that. And so I'm looking forward to being able, on African soil, to once again thank him on behalf of the American people for showing how American generosity and foresight could end up making a real difference in people's lives.

Egypt/U.S. Foreign Aid

Q. And the U.S. aid to Egypt?

President Obama. Well, Jonathan, I have to say that your numbers on U.S. aid to Egypt were a little bit imprecise. We have some regular assistance that we provide Egypt. We have some dollars that have been held up and have to be approved by Congress. But the way we make decisions about assistance to Egypt is based on are they in fact following rule of law and democratic procedures. And we don't make those decisions just by counting the number of heads in a protest march, but we do make decisions based on whether or not a government is listening to the opposition, maintaining a free press, maintaining freedom of assembly, not using violence or intimidation, conducting fair and free elections. And those are the kinds of things that we're examining, and we press the Egyptian Government very hard on those issues.

President Kikwete. Is President Obama's visit significant? Very significant. Why am I saying so? Africa needs the United States. The United States needs Africa. And the only way you can build this relationship is through exchange of visits, and visits at the highest level speaks volumes about doing that. So I would say the visit of President Obama to Africa consolidates existing relations, but also advances them to greater heights for the mutual benefits of our two countries and our two peoples.

President Bush and Madam Laura Bush are visiting Tanzania. The George Bush Foundation has programs supporting African First Ladies in the work that they do in their respective countries, particularly supporting women groups and supporting girls with regards to education and empowerment.

Were we excited? In this, we have the President and the former President in Tanzania at the same time. It's a blessing to this country.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Moderator. Mr. President, thank you. We'll take a second question now, and I'll call on Saleh Manemilongo to ask the question.

Q. My name is Saleh Manemilongo from National Radio and Television in Democratic Republic of Congo. My question to President Obama: Mr. President, there has been no peace in Congo for almost 20 years now. As a powerful nation in the world and a permanent member of the Security Council with a lot of influence to major players of the Congo conflict, how is the U.S. going to assist DRC and the Great Lakes to reach a permanent peace? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, the people of Congo need a chance. They need a fair chance to live their lives, raise their families, and they haven't had that opportunity because of constant conflict and war for way too many years. And of course, the tragedy is compounded by the fact that Congo is so rich in natural resources and potential, but because of this constant conflict and instability, the people of Congo haven't benefited from that.

I want to congratulate, again, President Kikwete and others who have helped to shape a peace framework. Because one of the things that I've said throughout this trip is, the United States doesn't seek to impose solutions on Africa. We want to work with Africans to find solutions to some of these ongoing security and regional problems.

And so the fact that you now have a peace framework that the various parties have signed onto is critical. But it can't just be a piece of paper; there has to be followthrough. And so one of the things that I discussed with President Kikwete is how we can encourage all the parties concerned to follow through on commitments that they've made in order to bring about a lasting solution inside of Congo. That means, for example, that President Kabila inside of Congo, he has to do more and better when it comes to dealing with the DRC's capacity on security issues and delivery of services. And that's very important, because if there's a continuing vacuum there, then that vacuum sometimes gets filled by actors that don't have the best interests of Congo at heart. And we're prepared to work the United Nations and regional organizations and others to help him build capacity.

The countries surrounding the Congo, they've got to make commitments to stop funding armed groups that are encroaching on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Congo. And they've signed onto a piece of paper now; now the question is, do they follow through?

And so we're prepared to work with anybody to try to make this happen. Ultimately, though, the countries involved have to recognize, it is in their self-interest to do so. We can't force a solution onto the region. The peoples of the region have to stand up and say that's enough; it's time to move forward in a different way. And by the way, that means holding those who've committed gross human rights abuses accountable for what they've done.

But there's an opportunity for peace here. And the countries surrounding the Congo should recognize that if the Congo stabilizes, that will improve the prospects for their growth and their prosperity, because right now, it's as if you have a millstone around your neck. If you have one of the biggest countries in terms of geography in all of Africa with all these natural resources, but it's constantly a problem as opposed to being part of the solution, everybody suffers.

Tanzania should be doing more trade with the DRC. Rwanda should be doing more trade and commerce with the DRC. One of the things we're talking about it how do we get more intra-Africa trade, because if countries like Tanzania are going to improve their economic position in the globe, the first thing they have to do is to make sure they can trade with each other more effectively. All right?

Right now in Africa—this is true not just in Tanzania, but in Kenya and Uganda and other places—it's easier to send flowers or coffee to Europe than it is to send it across the way. And that means that fewer businesses are getting started and fewer jobs are being created.

So we want to work with the existing international structures like the United Nations, and we're supportive of the brigade that's been shaped and in which Tanzania is making a contribution. But ultimately, it's going to be the African countries themselves that have to follow up on the commitments that they've already made.

[*At this point, a reporter began asking a question.*]

President Obama. Hold on, hold on a second.

Press Secretary Carney. Sorry. I think the American press corps has the next question. It goes to Kristen Welker of NBC News.

Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. President Obama, President Kikwete, thank you very much. President Obama, the first question goes to you, and I want to get your reaction to a breaking news alert that just came in a few minutes ago. According to Reuters, a senior Russian security official says that you and President Putin have asked the FBI and FSB to seek a solution on Snowden, so can you confirm that report?

Also, the latest leaks by Edward Snowden suggest the United States have been monitoring the phone and e-mail records of its allies in the EU. So is the United States spying on its European allies? Also, France and other countries are demanding an explanation, with France saying that free trade talks could be threatened. So how can you reassure your allies to make sure that free trade talks aren't threatened and that your relations abroad are not damaged? And what will the Federal response be to the 19 firefighters who were killed in Arizona? Thank you.

And to President Kikwete, did you discuss with President Obama the Tanzanian diplomat who was stationed in Washington, DC, and fined a million dollars for holding a woman against her will as a domestic servant? Is this person still an adviser to you, and does this issue in any way undercut your ability to fight human trafficking in your great country? Thank you, to both of you.

President Obama. Well, I can confirm—because I said so, I think, at the beginning of this

trip in one of the first questions that was asked—that we have gone through regular law enforcement channels in enforcing the extradition request that we've made with respect to Mr. Snowden. And that's been true with all the countries that have been involved, including Russia. And so there have been high-level discussions with the Russians about trying to find a solution to the problem.

We don't have an extradition treaty with Russia. On the other hand, Mr. Snowden, we understand, has traveled there without a valid passport, without legal papers. And we are hopeful that the Russian Government makes decisions based on the normal procedures regarding international travel and the normal interactions that law enforcement have. So I can confirm that.

With respect to the latest article that, in part, I gather, is prompted by Mr. Snowden's leaks, we're still evaluating the article because the problem is that these things come out in dribs and drabs. We don't know necessarily what they're referred—what programs they're referring to; we don't know how they're sourced. And so what I've said is, to my team, take a look at this article, figure out what they may or may not be talking about, and then what we'll do is we'll communicate to our allies appropriately.

But I'll make some general points. So I'm not going to comment on any particular allegation, but I'll make a couple of general points. Number one, the Europeans are some of the closest allies that we have in the world. And we work with them on everything, and we share intelligence constantly. And our primary concerns are the various security threats that may have an impact on both our countries.

The initial two programs that were of concern as a consequence of the Snowden leak had to do with a very particular issue, and that is, were we going around snooping and reading people's e-mails and listening to people's phone calls, whether that was in the United States or in Europe. And I responded to that when I was in Europe, in Germany, explaining that one program had to do with telephone numbers that were exchanged without content. The other was very narrowly tailored to deal with threats like terrorism, proliferation, and that all of this was done legally and under the supervision of the FISA Court. So that's one set of issues.

Now, there's a second set of issues that this article seems to be raising, and that is how our intelligence services operate generally around the world. And I think we should stipulate that every intelligence service—not just ours, but every European intelligence service, every Asian intelligence service, wherever there's an intelligence service—here's one thing that they're going to be doing: They're going to be trying to understand the world better and what's going on in world capitals around the world from sources that aren't available through the New York Times or NBC News; that they are seeking additional insight beyond what's available through open sources.

The—and if that weren't the case, then there would be no use for an intelligence service. And I guarantee you that in European capitals, there are people who are interested in, if not what I had for breakfast, at least what my talking points might be should I end up meeting with their leaders. That's how intelligence services operate.

So I don't know what is precisely in this article. I've asked my team and the NSA to evaluate everything that's being claimed. When we have an answer, we will make sure to provide all the information that our allies want and what exactly the allegations have been.

But I can—here's one last thing I'll say. I'm the end user of this kind of intelligence. And if I want to know what Chancellor Merkel is thinking, I will call Chancellor Merkel. If I want to know what President Hollande is thinking on a particular issue, I'll call President Hollande. If I want to know what David Cameron is thinking, I'll call David Cameron. Ultimately, we work so closely together that there's almost no information that's not shared between our various countries.

And—but I do think it's important for everybody analytically to separate this issue, which is how our intelligence service is gathering information about the world versus the particular

programs that were initially the cause of this controversy, which I was responding to when I was in Germany. All right?

Arizona Wildfires

Q. And the wildfires?

The President. Oh, thank you. See, this is what happens when I've got too many questions. [*Laughter*] Obviously, the news is heartbreaking. And our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the brave firefighters who are out there.

This is one more reminder of the fact that our first responders, they put their lives on the line every single day. And every time we have a community in crisis, a disaster strikes, we've got people in need. Firefighters, law enforcement officers, they run towards the danger. And so we are heartbroken about what happened. Obviously, we're prepared to provide any support we can in investigating exactly how this took place.

I think we're going to have to ask ourselves a set of broader questions about how we're handling increasingly deadly and difficult firefights. Wildfires have been continually escalating at higher and higher cost, and putting more and more pressure not only on the Federal fire services, but also on State and local fire services. And we're going to have to think about what more we can do on that front. But for now, I think what we're most concerned about is how painful these losses are.

President Kikwete. The question that was directed to me: Yes, I am aware of a situation in Washington that involved one of our diplomats who later we recalled. This incident involves a young sister of the wife of this diplomat. They took her with them to help her get education and support her—make it in life. And then I think there was a conflict within the family, and then this young lady accused the brother-in-law and the sister of using her for cheap—free, cheap labor.

The court decided on a 1 million fine, an amount which, for a Tanzanian, there is no way that he can afford to pay. See, even the President here—the President—when I retire, my retirement benefits cannot pay that, because we get far less. Then, I think there was reconsideration for this gentleman to pay $175,000, which, as far as I know, has already been paid. So that matter has been put to rest.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:09 p.m. at the State House. In his remarks, the President referred to Hasheem Thabeet, center, National Basketball Association's Oklahoma City Thunder; President Muhammad Mursi of Egypt; former First Lady Laura Bush; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President François Hollande of France; and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. He also referred to Executive Order 13648, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. President Kikwete referred to former Tanzanian diplomat Alan S. Mzengi, his former housekeeper Zipora Mazengo, and his wife Stella Mzengi. Reporters referred to former President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and Security Council Secretary Nikolay Platonovich Patrushev and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Statement on the Wildfires in Arizona
July 1, 2013

Yesterday 19 firefighters were killed in the line of duty while fighting a wildfire outside Yarnell, Arizona. They were heroes: highly skilled professionals who, like so many across our country do every day, selflessly put themselves in harm's way to protect the lives and property of fellow citizens they would never meet. In recent days, hundreds of firefighters have battled extremely dangerous blazes across Arizona and the Southwest. The Federal Government is already assisting, and we will remain in close contact with State and local officials to provide the support they need. But today Michelle and I join all Americans in sending our thoughts and prayers to the families of these brave firefighters and all whose lives have been upended by this terrible tragedy.

Remarks to African Business Leaders in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
July 1, 2013

The President. Thank you. Good evening, everybody. Please, please have a seat. I apologize that we're a little bit late, but some of your colleagues had many things to say, and they were all extremely valuable. And I wanted to spend at least as much time listening as I was speaking.

Let me begin by expressing our gratitude to President Kikwete and the people of Dar es Salaam and Tanzania for their incredible hospitality. Thank you to our hosts, the Corporate Council on Africa, for bringing us here together. And I want to acknowledge the Secretary General of the East Africa Community, Richard Sezibera, and the President of the African Development Bank, Donald Kaberuka. I want to thank both of them for their incredible leadership. So please give them a round of applause.

And I want to welcome all of you who have come from across the region—Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi—and beyond, including the United States.

I'm pleased to be joined by leaders from across my administration, including my new U.S. Trade Representative, Mike Froman. Mike, where are you? The—stand up so everybody knows—[*applause*]—because Mike will be very busy working to increase trade and commerce between the United States and Africa. We've also got USAID Administrator Raj Shah. We've got a son of Ethiopia who achieved great success in America and now leads our Millennium Challenge Corporation, Daniel Yohannes. And President of the Export-Import Bank Fred Hochberg; Director of U.S. Trade and Development Agency Lee Zak; and our Executive Vice President of OPIC, Mimi Alemayehou.

Now, we just had an opportunity to have a terrific conversation with some of you about what we can be doing together to promote investment between our countries and economic growth here in Africa. And that's what I want to just speak on briefly today.

This is my final leg of my visit to Africa. And at every stop, one of my main messages has been that even as this continent faces great challenges, this is also a moment of great promise for Africa. And it's a tribute to the extraordinary drive and talents and determination of Africans all across the continent. So yesterday, in Cape Town, I said that I believe this creates opportunities for a new kind of relationship between the United States and Africa: a partnership rooted in equality and shared interests. And it starts by building on the progress that we're seeing and empowering Africans to access even greater economic opportunity.

And that's a worthy goal in its own right, but I'm also here because, in a global economy, our fortunes are linked like never before. So more growth and opportunity in Africa can mean more growth and opportunity in the United States. And this is not charity, this is self-interest. And that's why a key element of my engagement with Africa, and a key focus during this trip, has been to promote trade and investment that can create jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. And I believe we can accomplish that, because we've got an enormous opportunity to unleash the next era of African growth. And many of you know it better than I because you're at the forefront of it.

Africa is home to many of the world's fastest growing economies. Sectors like retail, telecom, and manufacturing are gaining speed. And here in East Africa, over a decade, the region's economy quadrupled. The world's investing in Africa like never before. In fact, we're close to reaching a historic milestone where foreign aid to Africa is surpassed by foreign investment in Africa. And that's great news.

And that growth is changing lives. Poverty rates are coming down. Incomes are going up. More Africans are joining a growing middle class. African consumers are spending more and creating new markets where we can all sell our goods.

So I see Africa as the world's next major economic success story. And the United States wants to be a partner in that success. That's why OPIC has tripled its investments in Africa, from hospitals in Ghana to biomass power generation right here in Tanzania. We launched a campaign to encourage more American companies to do business here. And we've increased the value of our financing and support for trade and investment dramatically, to more than $7 billion.

And we've seen progress. Over the past decade, under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, African exports to the U.S. have surged and support jobs across the continent. Our exports to Africa have tripled, with Caterpillar, for example, from my home State of Illinois, selling mining trucks to Mozambique. Boeing's selling airplanes to Kenya—Kenyan Airways. America-made solar-powered water treatment systems sold in Senegal and Cameroon, they're supporting jobs back in Pennsylvania.

So we're making progress, but we're here because we know there's a lot more work that has to be done. There's a lot of untapped potential. The entire GDP of sub-Saharan Africa is still less than $2 trillion, which is about the same as Italy. Our entire trade with Africa is about the same as our trade with Brazil or South Korea, countries with a fraction of Africa's population. Of all our exports to the world, only about 2 percent goes to Africa. So I know we could be doing much more together. And let me suggest a few ways where we can make progress.

First, to keep our trade growing, we need to renew AGOA. But we've also got to make some decisions about how we can make it more effective. Today, the vast majority of our trade with Africa is with just three countries: South Africa, Nigeria, and Angola. We need to broaden that. We need to make sure more Africans are taking advantage of the opportunity to export to the United States. And one of the best ways to do that is to make sure more African goods can compete in the global marketplace. And that means more opportunities for small and medium-sized companies and entrepreneurs and merchants and farmers, including women. And so I'm pleased that Mike Froman will kick off this process at the next AGOA Forum next month in Addis.

But let me be candid: Improving AGOA is not going to be enough. The real answer to unlocking the next era of African growth is not in Washington, it's here in Africa. And during the discussion with business leaders, we've got some terrific ideas about how we can release that energy.

First of all, African governments are going to have to take the lead, not because the United States says so, because—but because that's what works best. And for those willing to do the hard work of the necessary reforms to create a vibrant market economy and business environment, the United States is going to be a steady and eager partner.

So, for example, the vast majority of Africans working in agriculture, that's potential that has not been fully tapped. So we need country-led plans that can attract private capital so we're boosting the income of small farmers, which can fuel broad-based economic growth and lift 50 million Africans from poverty, putting some money in the pockets of the agricultural sector: small farmers, small shareholders. Suddenly, you've got customers for a whole range of products, and that gives additional opportunities for African manufacturers or telecom companies or insurance. Tidjane, he always wants me to talk about insurance. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes.

For the overwhelming number of Africans who are young, we've got to make sure they've got skills and the networks and the capital to realize their ambitions. So that's one of the reasons I'm announcing the expansion of my Young African Leaders Initiative, so we're investing in the next generation of African leaders in government and nonprofits, but also in business.

We know that it has to become easier to do business in Africa. This is something that we had extensive conversations about, and all of you know this better than anyone. You've figured out how to work around the constraints,

but we need to tear down these constraints. It still takes way too long—too many documents, too much bureaucracy—just to start a business, to build a new facility, to start exporting. And one of the useful comments that came during our discussion is, if we're going to, for example, build a lot of power around Africa, we can't have a 7-year timeframe for building a power plant. We've got to move. Things have to go faster. And government can have an impact on that, for good or for ill.

So, as part of our partnership for growth, we're working with countries like Tanzania and Ghana to make sure rules and regulations are encouraging investment, not scaring it away. And by the way, if we can synchronize regionally between countries so that there is some standardization of how business gets done, that's helpful too, because then people don't have to try to figure out and unlock a different bureaucracy and a different system and different paperwork for even the most routine tasks.

We know that strengthening good governance is good business as well, and this is something that I've been emphasizing throughout my trip with leaders and with citizens in Senegal and South Africa and now in Tanzania. No one should have to pay a bribe to start a business or ship their goods. You shouldn't have to hire somebody's cousin who doesn't come to work just to get your job—get your business done. [*Laughter*] You shouldn't have to do that.

So as part of our global effort against corruption, we're working with countries across Africa to improve governance, advance open government, uphold the rule of law, because trade will flow where rules are predictable and investment is protected.

We also know that unleashing Africa's economic potential demands more access to electricity. That's how businesses keep the light on. That's how communities can literally connect to the global economy. And more than two-thirds of the people in sub-Saharan Africa have no access to electricity, even as Africa's potential to produce energy is vast. And that's unacceptable in 2013.

So that's why yesterday I announced Power Africa, our initiative to double access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa. And I want to thank the African Development Bank for its partnership, as well as many companies that have stepped up with commitments, including some here. And I have to say, those who are involved in this process, they continually tell us the problem is not going to be private sector financing. The problem is going to be getting the rules right, creating the framework whereby we can build to scale rapidly. That's what we're committed to doing.

We're starting with countries that are making progress already with reforms in the energy sector: Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Mozambique, and Liberia. And with a focus on cleaner energy, we will initially add 10,000 megawatts of new electricity generation, which expands electricity to 20 million homes and businesses.

We also know that many of the greatest opportunities for growth are often in markets right next door, right across the border. But if it's easier for you to sell to Europe than it is to the folks right next door, we've got a problem. That's a constraint on African development and growths. So here in East Africa, by reducing tariffs and pursuing a customs union, you've already doubled trade between your countries in recent years. But we've got to keep working. It should not take longer to ship products between African countries than it does to ship to Europe. A company like Ford shouldn't have to transport cars to Kenya from South Africa by airplane because it's so expensive or unreliable to do it by road or by rail. So you've got to create a situation in which is easier to trade within Africa.

So today I'm announcing a new initiative, Trade Africa, to boost trade with and within Africa, starting with the East Africa Community. And as part of this effort, we'll negotiate a regional investment treaty with the EAC. We'll launch a new program to facilitate trade by focusing on moving goods across borders faster and cheaper. We'll work with the countries involved to modernize customs; move to single, more efficient border crossings; reduce bottle-

necks; reduce the roadblocks that stymie the flow of goods to market.

And we're focused on specific goals. So moving goods faster between ports like Dar es Salaam and Mombasa to Burundi and Rwanda in the interior; or reducing the wait times that truckers endure at the border; increasing East African exports to the United States under AGOA by 40 percent; and not simply increasing trade within East Africa—doubling it. That's our aim. That's what we're—those are the goals we're setting for ourselves under Trade Africa and here in East Africa. And we intend to be—we intend this to be the foundation for similar progress regionally that we can do across the continent in years to come.

And finally, we're going to sustain our efforts. I'm making this trip early in my second term because I intend for this to be the beginning of a new level of economic engagement with Africa. So I'm announcing today that my new Commerce Secretary, Penny Pritzker, will lead a major trade mission to Africa in her first year. My Treasury Secretary and my Energy Secretary will come to the region as well. We will bring American investors and businesses together in a major conference on doing business in Africa. Other American trade missions next year will focus on forging new partnerships in agriculture and energy and infrastructure. So across the board, we want to step up our game.

And the bottom line is this: I want to make sure we're doing everything we can to encourage the new growth we're seeing across Africa and more trade between our countries. And that's what your companies represent. That's what the incredible young men and women from across Africa who I met at our town hall in Soweto represent. I was hearing their stories and the impact they're already having and listening to their hopes and seeing their determination to build their lives and their communities and their countries, and it just reinforced everything I believe about Africa and its people.

If people across this continent are just given a chance, if they're just empowered with the skills and the resources and the capital, and government is accelerating and advancing their opportunities as opposed to it being an impediment, they can achieve extraordinary progress. And that's what I believe. And I know that's what you believe.

And that's why the United States is going to keep investing in efforts that unleash that potential and its greater—greatest natural resource, which is its citizens. When we do, I'm absolutely convinced it won't just mean more growth and opportunity for Africa, it will mean greater prosperity for the United States and indeed the world. So thank you very much for participating. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Dar es Salaam, The Kilimanjaro. In his remarks, he referred to Tidjane Thiam, group chief executive, Prudential plc; Secretary of Commerce Penny S. Pritzker; and Secretary of Energy Ernest J. Moniz.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam
July 1, 2013

Well, President Kikwete, Madam First Lady, distinguished guests: On behalf of myself and Michelle, our delegation, oura daughters, we want to thank you for the incredible warmth and hospitality with which you've greeted us throughout the day. We could not be more grateful.

I am not the first American leader to visit this beautiful country. Other Presidents and prominent citizens have come before me. We just came from South Africa, where Robert Kennedy famously spoke of how every time we stand up for an ideal, we send out a "tiny ripple of hope." Less known is that after that trip to South Africa, Robert Kennedy also came here to Tanzania. It was a little different back then. Kennedy and his wife Ethel rode in the back of

an open truck. The Secret Service has me and Michelle inside a fortified limousine. We call it the Beast. [*Laughter*] As Kennedy's truck made its way through the crowds, he picked up two boys and let them ride alongside them. The Secret Service doesn't let me do these things. [*Laughter*] When Kennedy came, it was a public holiday here. I apologize to Tanzanians that you all had to work today. [*Laughter*]

But while have—while these times have changed, the good feelings stay the same. We've been deeply touched by the welcome and the warm wishes from the Tanzanian people: along the streets as we came in here, with you tonight. Dar es Salaam means "harbor of peace," and we thank you for sharing that sense of peace and brotherhood for which this country and its people have long been known.

Mr. President, you've shown wisdom and strength in seeking reforms so that more Tanzanians can enjoy progress, more opportunity. And like me, you're strengthened by a woman who is a leader in her own right. I am told that Mama Kikwete is fond of a traditional Tanzanian saying: "My neighbor's child is my child." And that sentiment, I think, also captures the feeling the partnership between our two countries must have. We live thousands of miles apart, but as fellow human beings, we share a sense of obligation to each other, especially to the youngest among us.

So you might say an American child is my child. We might say a Tanzanian child is my child. In this way, both of our nations will be looking after all of our children, and we'll be living out the vision of President Nyerere. The core values that he proclaimed for Tanzania also describe what both our countries seek: wisdom, unity, and peace—*hekima, umoja, na amani.*

So what I'd like to do is to propose a toast, if I can get my water here: To our gracious Tanzanian hosts, to our Tanzanian friends, and to wisdom, unity, and peace that we all seek in the world.

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

Cheers.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:58 p.m. at the State House. In his remarks, he referred to Salma Kikwete, wife of President Kikwete.

Remarks at the Ubungo Symbion Power Plant in Dar es Salaam
July 2, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, it is wonderful to be here with President Kikwete. I want to thank everybody from Ubungo Power Plant for this visit. We are here today to focus on one of the biggest hurdles to Africa's economic development: the fact that nearly 70 percent of Africans lack access to electricity.

And that's why in my speech in Cape Town, I announced a major new initiative, Power Africa, to double access to electricity here in Africa. Now, the first step that we're going to take is to try to bring electricity to 20 million homes and businesses.

And this plant represents the kind of public-private partnership that we want to replicate all across the continent. This facility was idle. But the Tanzanian Government, under President Kikwete's leadership, committed to making reforms in the energy sector. With support from the Millennium Challenge grant, General Electric, and Symbion, they got it up and running again. More Tanzanians got electricity.

So Power Africa embraces this model. Public and private resources will be matched with projects led by African countries that are taking the lead on reform. In this case, African Governments commit to energy reforms, the U.S. is committing some $7 billion in support, and private sector companies have already committed more than $9 billion. And this is just the beginning, because we look forward to even more companies joining this effort.

So this is a win-win. It's a win for Africans: Families get to electrify their homes; businesses can run their plants; investors can say, if we

locate in an African country, that they're going to be able to power up in a reliable way. All this will make economies grow. It's a win for the United States because the investments made here, including in cleaner energy, means more exports for the U.S. and more jobs in the U.S. And obviously, a growing market in Africa will mean more opportunities for all countries.

And this reflects—is representative of my new approach when it comes to development. I believe that the purpose of development should be to build capacity and to help other countries actually stand on their own feet, whether it's in agriculture, in health systems, in electricity. Instead of perpetual aid, development has to fuel investment and economic growth so that assistance is no longer necessary or some of the more successful countries in Africa can start being donors instead of recipients of assistance.

But development isn't just about big projects. Sometimes, simple ideas can bring about transformational change. Some of you saw the Soccket, the soccer ball that we were kicking around that generates electricity as it's kicked. I don't want to get too technical, but I thought it was pretty cool. And this is developed by two young women from the U.S., so Soccket turns one of the most popular games in Africa into a source of electricity and progress. And you can imagine this in villages all across the continent.

So that's just the example of the kind of creativity that is possible if we've got the public sector and the private sector and the not-for-profit sectors all working together.

Now, in order for this to work, though, we all have to feel a sense of urgency. One of the things, Mr. President, that I learned around the business roundtable is: if we are going to electrify Africa, we've got to do it with more speed. We can't have projects that take 7, 8, 9 years to be approved and to get on line. If we're going to make this happen, we've got to cut through the redtape, and that can only happen with leadership like the leadership that President Kikwete has shown.

We've got to be able to say, when the environmental studies are done, when the planning is done, when the paperwork is done, we can move this approval process, clear the redtape, make sure that the regulatory structure is in place, and get these things up and running in a timely way. Because it's hard to attract private-sector business if they feel as if their money is going to be tied up forever in uncertainty. So we want to focus on speed, but we also want to do it right. And the United States intends to be a strong partner in this process.

This is my last stop on my trip. We're going to be heading home right after this. And as I think about the week that we've spent here, I think about the farmers in Senegal who are harnessing new technologies and, as a consequence, increasing yields; women who started off with 1 hectare now having 16 and doubling or tripling their income and buying a tractor for the first time, and suddenly, they're employing people, and the entire community is benefiting.

I think about amazing young Africans that I saw at the town hall meeting down in Soweto, and their eagerness to promote trade, not just to seek aid, to be entrepreneurs and start businesses, and just hoping that the Governments will support them and that the efforts will be made to increase transparency and accountability and to eliminate corruption.

I think about the visit here to Tanzania: the incredible progress that's been made in reducing malaria and HIV and tuberculosis, the progress that's been made in terms of education and agricultural improvements, and progress that's being made as represented by this power plant.

And I think of all these things, and I see leaders like President Kikwete who are making every effort to do the right thing, and I'm inspired. Because I'm absolutely convinced that, with the right approach, Africa and its people can unleash a new era of prosperity. And that's what Power Africa is all about. That's what Feed the Future is all about. That's what all our efforts are going to be about, is making sure that Africans have the tools to create a better life for their people and that the United States is a partner in that process. It's going to be good for Africa, it's going to be good for the

United States, and it's going to be good for the world.

So thank you very much, everyone. And most of all, thank you, President Kikwete, for your wonderful hospitality. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at Ubungo Plaza. In his remarks, he referred to Jessica O. Matthews, cofounder and chief executive officer, and Julia Silverman, cofounder and advisory board member, Uncharted Play.

Statement on the Death of Former Representative William H. Gray III
July 2, 2013

Bill Gray was a trailblazer, proudly representing his beloved Philadelphia in Congress for over a decade as the first African American to chair the Budget Committee and to serve as the Majority Whip. Bill's extraordinary leadership, on issues from housing to transportation to supporting efforts that ended apartheid in South Africa, made our communities, our country, and our world a more just place. Michelle and I extend our deepest sympathies to Bill's family, especially to his wife Andrea and their three sons.

NOTE: The statement referred to Andrew D. Gray, Justin Y. Gray, and William H. Gray IV, sons of former Rep. Gray.

Statement on the Situation in Egypt
July 3, 2013

As I have said since the Egyptian revolution, the United States supports a set of core principles, including opposition to violence, protection of universal human rights, and reform that meets the legitimate aspirations of the people. The United States does not support particular individuals or political parties, but we are committed to the democratic process and respect for the rule of law. Since the current unrest in Egypt began, we have called on all parties to work together to address the legitimate grievances of the Egyptian people, in accordance with the democratic process and without recourse to violence or the use of force.

The United States is monitoring the very fluid situation in Egypt, and we believe that ultimately, the future of Egypt can only be determined by the Egyptian people. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned by the decision of the Egyptian Armed Forces to remove President Mursi and suspend the Egyptian Constitution. I now call on the Egyptian military to move quickly and responsibly to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible through an inclusive and transparent process and to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Mursi and his supporters. Given today's developments, I have also directed the relevant departments and agencies to review the implications under U.S. law for our assistance to the Government of Egypt.

The United States continues to believe firmly that the best foundation for lasting stability in Egypt is a democratic political order with participation from all sides and all political parties: secular and religious, civilian and military. During this uncertain period, we expect the military to ensure that the rights of all Egyptian men and women are protected, including the right to peaceful assembly, due process, and free and fair trials in civilian courts. Moreover, the goal of any political process should be a government that respects the rights of all people, majority and minority; that institutionalizes the checks and balances upon which democracy depends; and that places the interests of the people above party or faction. The voices of all those who have protested peacefully must be heard, including those who welcomed today's developments and those who have supported President Mursi. In the interim, I urge all sides to avoid violence and come together to ensure the lasting restoration of Egypt's democracy.

No transition to democracy comes without difficulty, but in the end it must stay true to the will of the people. An honest, capable, and representative government is what ordinary Egyptians seek and what they deserve. The long-standing partnership between the United States and Egypt is based on shared interests and values, and we will continue to work with the Egyptian people to ensure that Egypt's transition to democracy succeeds.

The President's Weekly Address
July 4, 2013

Hi, everybody. I hope you all had a safe and happy Fourth of July filled with parades and cookouts, fireworks and family reunions.

We celebrated at the White House with a few hundred members of the military and their families. And we took a moment amid the festivities to remember what our Independence Day is all about: what happened 237 years ago and what it meant to the world.

On July 4, 1776, a small band of patriots declared that we were a people created equal, free to think and worship and live as we please. It was a declaration heard around the world: that we were no longer colonists, we were Americans, and our destiny would not be determined for us, it would be determined by us.

It was a bold and tremendously brave thing to do. It was also nearly unthinkable. At the time, kings and princes and emperors ruled the world. But those patriots were certain that a better way was possible. And to achieve it, to win their freedom, they were willing to lay it all on the line: their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor. They fought a revolution. Few would have bet on their side to win, but for the first of many times to come, America proved the doubters wrong.

And now, 237 years later, the United States—this improbable Nation—is the greatest in the world: a land of liberty and opportunity, a global defender of peace and freedom, a beacon of hope to people everywhere who cherish those ideals. Generations of Americans made our country what it is today—farmers and teachers, engineers and laborers, entrepreneurs and elected leaders—people from all walks of life, from all parts of the world, all pulling in the same direction.

And now we, the people, must make their task our own: to live up to the words of that Declaration of Independence and secure liberty and opportunity for our own children and for future generations.

I want to say a special word of thanks to the men and women of our military, who have played such a vital role in the story of our Nation. You have defended us at home and abroad. And you fought on our Nation's behalf to make the world a better, safer place. People in scattered corners of the world are living in peace today, free to write their own futures, because of you. We are grateful for your service and your sacrifice, especially those still serving in harm's way and your families here at home.

So God bless you all, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:05 p.m. on July 3 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast on July 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 3, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 4.

Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration
July 4, 2013

The President. Come on out, guys. [*Applause*] Hello, everybody.

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Welcome to the White House. And happy Fourth of July!

So we've tried to plan a proper Fourth of July celebration. We're grilling some food. We've got the fireworks coming. We've got lots of music. The band Fun is here with us today. And we've got multiple groups from our

Marine Band. We've got the Marine concert band. We've got the Dixieland band. We've got the marching band. And we've got Free Country, the country band.

So we hope everybody has a great time. We are incredibly grateful for your service, and we're thankful that you get a chance to spend the Fourth here with us. And by the way, it's Malia's birthday, so she is appreciative that you're all going to be wishing her a happy birthday as well.

So I don't want to keep you from the food, but let me just say this. There are children all over the world right now asking their parents what's so special about today. And maybe some of those little ones are running around even here in the South Lawn, thinking, well, this is just an excuse for some hotdogs. [*Laughter*] But it's worth remembering what happened 237 years ago on this date and what it meant to the world.

On July 4, 1776, a small band of patriots declared that we were a people created equal, free to think and worship and live as we please; that our destiny would not be determined for us, it would be determined by us. And it was bold, and it was brave. And it was unprecedented; it was unthinkable. At that time in human history, it was kings and princes and emperors who made decisions.

But those patriots knew there was a better way of doing things, that freedom was possible, and that to achieve their freedom, they'd be willing to lay down their lives, their fortunes, their honor. And so they fought a revolution. And few would have bet on their side, but for the first time of many times to come, America proved the doubters wrong.

And now, 237 years later, this improbable experiment in democracy, the United States of America, stands as the greatest nation on Earth. And what makes us great is, not our size or our wealth, but our values and our ideals and the fact that we're willing to fight for them. A land of liberty and opportunity, a global defender of peace and freedom, a beacon of hope for people everywhere who cherish those ideals.

And we have also earned it—you have earned it—because as part of a long line of folks who are willing to fight for those ideals, we've been able to not only preserve and make more perfect this Union, but also try to spread that light elsewhere. You, the fighting men and women of the United States, and those who came before you, you've played a special role. You've defended our Nation at home and abroad. You fought for our Nation's beliefs to make the world a better and safer place. People in scattered corners of the world live in peace today, are free to write their own futures, because of you.

And we've got all of you here today. We've got Army. We've got Navy. We've got Air Force. We've got Marines. We've got Coast Guard. And we've got National Guard. That's all right, National Guard, we love you too.

And up here with me are incredibly capable and brave men and women from each service branch. And we salute you, one and all. We salute our soldiers, like Specialist Heidi Olson, who, when she was wounded by an IED in Afghanistan, gave lifesaving treatment to another injured soldier, and then another. She had to be ordered to stop and get treatment for herself when the medevac aircraft arrived. And for her courage she was awarded a Bronze Star. Give her a big round of applause.

We salute our sailors, like Petty Officer Joe Marcinkowski, who serves wounded warriors at Walter Reed, coordinating their care and supporting their families throughout their recoveries. Thank you, Joe.

We salute our airmen, like Staff Sergeant Adam Ybarra, who helped save 9 lives in 11 combat search and mission rescues in Afghanistan in 2012. Give Adam a big round of applause.

We salute our Marines, like Corporal Amber Fifer, who was shot five times in an attack in Helmand Province and is staying on to serve as a Marine Corps drill instructor.

And we salute our Coasties, including Petty Officer Randy Haba, who was one of the first responders to rescue the crew of a ship off the coast of North Carolina when Hurricane Sandy struck and saved the lives of five mariners.

So every day, men and women like them, and like all of you, are carrying forward the ideals that inspired that American Dream 237 years ago. Defending our Nation and our freedoms with strength and with sacrifice is your daily charge. And it's the charge of all of us, the charge of all who serve worldwide, including our troops that are still in harm's way and their families back home. They serve too. And so we think of them, we pray for them.

And on behalf of all Americans, I want to say thank you and wish you all a very, very happy Fourth of July. You've earned it. So God bless you. God bless your families. God bless the United States of America.

And with that, let me turn it back over to the Marine Band.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks on Government Reform
July 8, 2013

Everybody, please have a seat. Well, thank you so much.

Back in 2007, when I was first running for this office, I had the opportunity to visit Google headquarters in Mountain View, in Silicon Valley, to discuss ways we could use technology to allow more citizens to participate in their democracy and bring a Government built largely in the 20th century into the 21st century.

After all, we had already set out to build a new type of campaign, one that used technology to bring people together and then trusted them with that technology to organize on their own. And the idea was simple: Instead of bringing more people to the campaign, we wanted to bring the campaign to more people and let them determine its course and its nature. If you wanted to make phone calls or knock on doors, you didn't have to come into a field office first, you could just get the information you needed right on your phone and go out there and do it. If you wanted to get your friends involved, then we had the tools to help you connect.

And I very much felt that some of the things that we were doing to help us get elected could also be used once we were elected. If you wanted to share your story, we could help you get your story out. And throughout this process, we created one of the most inclusive and one of the most successful campaigns in American history.

Now, once we got to Washington, instead of an operation humming with the latest technology, I had to fight really hard just to keep my BlackBerry. [*Laughter*] And as anyone knows, dealing with the Federal Government is not always high tech, and it's not always user-friendly.

So, over the past 4½ years, we've worked diligently to change that. Just like we did on that campaign, we started by recruiting some of the smartest people from the private sector to work side by side with some of the smartest people in the public sector to help get it done. So that day that I visited Google, I promised to appoint the Nation's first CTO, Chief Technology Officer. And soon after I took office, I did. Today, our Chief Technology Officer, Todd Park, and our Chief Information Officer, Steve VanRoekel, are working with their teams to innovate and apply the best technology to help solve some of our biggest challenges, from creating jobs to reducing health care costs, to keeping our Nation secure.

We are the first to confess that progress has not always come quick and major challenges still remain. But we've made huge swaths of your Government more efficient and more transparent and more accountable than ever before. And we've done it by focusing on three areas.

First, we found ways to deliver the services that citizens expect in smarter, faster, and better ways. So, for example, until recently, when a natural disaster struck, teams from FEMA had to rely exclusively on in-person inspections to figure out which families needed help. Now they analyze satellite and aerial imagery and get housing assistance to areas that need it most, more quickly. After Hurricane Sandy,

most folks were able to sign up for assistance using FEMA's mobile and web apps, updating and checking the status of their applications. And FEMA agents went door to door in some areas with iPads, helping residents who had lost power and Internet access sign up for disaster relief without leaving their homes; so making sure that we're delivering services better, faster, more efficiently.

Second, we've identified new ways to reduce waste and save taxpayers money. So, for example, just by working to get rid of overlapping IT systems, we've identified more than $2.5 billion in savings across the Federal Government, and that's just the beginning. I've proposed and signed into law the elimination of dozens of Federal programs and cut even more that were either duplicative, not working, or no longer needed, saving billions of dollars a year. And the basic principle is simple: Taxpayers deserve the biggest bang for their buck, especially at a time when budgets are tight, and we've got to do a lot more with less. And now anyone visit whitehouse.gov to see your taxpayer receipt. This is a literal receipt that tells you just how and where your tax dollars are being spent.

Finally, for the first time in history, we've opened up huge amounts of Government data to the American people and put it on the Internet for free. At data.gov, you can search through and download more than 75,000 data sets, data on everything from what different hospitals charge for different procedures to credit card complaints, to weather and climate measurements. And what's happening is, entrepreneurs and business owners are now using that data—the people's data—to create jobs and solve problems that Government can't solve by itself or can't do as efficiently.

So there's a company called Opower, for example, that's used open Government data on general energy trends and weather to help families save more than $300 million on their energy bills. There's another company called iTriage—founded by two emergency room doctors—that is using freely downloadable data about health care providers from the Department of Health and Human Services to help more than 9 million people find the closest doctors and hospitals that meet their needs. And the list goes on. And these companies have now hired hundreds of people, and they're still hiring. And millions of people have already used these applications that were created as a consequence of releasing this data.

So we've made some good progress on all fronts, but now we need to do more. So today I met with all my Cabinet, including a number of new Cabinet members, some of whom have extraordinary private sector experience, and I've directed the Cabinet to develop an aggressive management agenda for my second term that delivers a smarter, more innovative, and more accountable Government for its citizens. And we're going to continue to adopt good ideas from the private sector.

I've asked Sylvia Mathews Burwell, the Office—the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to lead this effort. And Sylvia was part of a team at OMB that presided over 3 years of budget surpluses in the 1990s. After philanthropic work at the Gates Foundation and the Walmart Foundation, she's come back to help us move this effort forward.

She's not the only one. We've also welcomed a new class of Presidential Innovation Fellows, and I'd love for the press to meet some of these folks, because they're extraordinary. These are Americans with vast private sector technology expertise who have volunteered to come serve their country in the private [public]* sector. So, for example, Scott Wu helped found a company that helps recent graduates turn their good ideas into good businesses. And Claire Holroyd used to manage product design for everything from mobile phones to video games. Garren Givens founded an innovative shopping site that adapts to your tastes as you browse. And so they and 40 other Fellows are taking this private sector expertise and bringing it into the Government, making it smarter, making it more user friendly.

* White House correction.

Today, for example, many online shopping websites help fill in some of your information so you don't have to enter it every time you log in. As a consequence, we're working on a project called MyUSA that will save you time by doing the same thing with Government forms. And if you're applying for Federal benefits, we think you should be able to track the status of your application in real time, just like you can follow location of a package all the way to your doorstep. These are things that are in the pipeline right now.

Currently, when our Government asks for bids on a project, it's usually written in complicated language with complicated requirements that most people don't understand. We're working to make things simpler so it's easier for more small businesses across the country to bid on projects. And we'll help businesses create more jobs doing work that needs to be done. And by opening up more competition to Government contracts, we'll save taxpayers money in the process.

We recently relaunched an upgraded, easier healthcare.gov. Beginning October 1, Americans will be able to log on and comparison shop an array of private health insurance plans side by side, just like you go online and compare the best deal on cars or the best deal on computers. Because you'll finally be part of a new pool with millions of other Americans, insurers will actually want to compete for your business. And we've made—we've worked really hard to make these marketplaces user friendly. So, for example, when the prototype of an application to join the marketplace came in at 21 pages, we rejected it. We said let's do better. It's now three pages long. And by the way, that's a lot shorter than the application you have to fill out for private insurance currently.

Last year, I also asked Congress for the authority to reorganize and consolidate the Federal bureaucracy. We're doing a lot of this work administratively, but unfortunately, there are still a bunch of rules, a lot of legislation that has poorly designed some of our agencies and forces folks to engage in bureaucratic jump hoop—hoop jumping instead of just going ahead and focusing on mission and delivering good service to our citizens. So what we've asked is, let's clean this up. Let's consolidate it.

Almost every President from Herbert Hoover to Ronald Reagan had this authority to redesign the Federal Government, the executive branch, to deliver services better, just like every business owner seeking to make sure that his or her company keep pace with the times. Currently, we do not have that capacity. And so I'm going to keep on doing what we can administratively, but we sure could use Congress's help, particularly at a time when Congress is saying they want more efficient Government—they give a lot of lip service to it—and we're operating under severe fiscal constraints.

It makes sense for us to be able to redesign Government so that it can deliver on the functions that the American people are looking for. We should all want a Government that's smarter, quicker, and more responsive to the needs of the American people.

Now, the good news is, America is full of talented, dedicated public servants who are working really hard every day to uphold the public trust. And those of us who believe that Government has a responsibility to guarantee some level of basic security and to make sure everybody gets a fair shot at success—from the entrepreneur who wants to start a business, to the workers who will work in that business—we also have a responsibility to make sure that Government works. And that's why I'm glad that we've got people like Scott and Claire and Garren and so many other talented, idealistic men and women who have signed up to help us tackle these challenges. That's why we're so proud that Sylvia is going to be heading this up.

And I'm going to be asking more people around the country—more inventors and entrepreneurs and visionaries—to sign up to serve. We've got to have the brightest minds to help solve our biggest challenges. And it's a reminder that in this democracy, we the people recognize that this Government belongs to us, and it's up to each of us and every one of us to make it work better. We can't just stand on the sidelines. We can't take comfort in just being

cynical. We all have a stake in Government success, because the Government is us.

And we're doing things right. When we're tracking weather more effectively, that saves lives for folks who are in the path of a tornado. When we're delivering, effectively, data on improved health care choices, that's going to save lives and reduce costs. And we've got the potential to do so much better than we're doing right now, but we're going to need the help of the private sector and non-for-profits. Most of all, we want to make sure that we're empowering some of the folks who are sitting here today to make sure that they can deliver on the kind of 21st-century Government that the American people want.

So thank you very much, everybody. Keep up the good work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:52 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Peter Hudson, cofounder and chief executive officer, and Wayne Guerra, cofounder and chief medical officer, iTriage; Scott Wu, founding team member, Upstart Network, Inc.; Clair Holroyd, former senior product manager, Sony Network Entertainment; and Garren Givens, chief executive officer, Dibsie.com.

Statement on the Observance of Ramadan
July 8, 2013

With the start of the sacred month of Ramadan, Michelle and I extend our best wishes to Muslim communities here in the United States and around the world.

For the world's 1.5 billion Muslims, Ramadan is a time for thoughtful reflection, fasting, and devotion. It is also an opportunity for family and friends to come together and celebrate the principles that bind people of different faiths: a commitment to peace, justice, equality, and compassion towards our fellow human beings. These bonds are far stronger than the differences that too often drive us apart.

This month also reminds us that freedom, dignity, and opportunity are the undeniable rights of all mankind. We reflect on these universal values at a time when many citizens across the Middle East and North Africa continue to strive for these basic rights and as millions of refugees mark Ramadan far from their homes. The United States stands with those who are working to build a world where all people can write their own future and practice their faith freely, without fear of violence.

In the United States, Ramadan is a reminder that millions of Muslim Americans enrich our Nation each day: serving in our Government, leading scientific breakthroughs, generating jobs, and caring for our neighbors in need. I have been honored to host an iftar dinner at the White House each of the past 4 years, and this year, I look forward to welcoming Muslim Americans who are contributing to our country as entrepreneurs, activists, and artists.

I wish Muslims across America and around the world a month blessed with the joys of family, peace, and understanding. *Ramadan kareem*.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medal of Arts and the National Humanities Medal
July 10, 2013

Hey! Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. See, everybody is cheering because I've bought their books, I've seen their movies, I buy their records. [*Laughter*] So we're major contributors here.

Well, hello, everybody, and welcome to the White House. Thank you for joining us to cele-

brate the recipients of the 2012—because, I guess, this is retrospective—National Medal of Arts and National Humanities Medals.

Now, one of the special privileges of this office is getting a chance to honor individuals who have played an important role in my life as well as in the Nation's life. And that's what today is all about: celebrating some extraordinary men and women who've used their talents in the arts and the humanities to open up minds and nourish souls and help us understand what it means to be human and what it means to be an American.

I want to give some special thanks to the people who help to preserve and to support that cultural legacy: the Acting Chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Joan Shigekawa. Give Joan a big round of applause. Where is she? There she is. And her predecessor, the irrepressible Rocco Landesman. As well as the Acting Chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Carole Watson. Both organizations do an incredible job lifting up some of today's best artists and scholars and helping to cultivate the next generation of talent and intellect.

And I'd like to also acknowledge the Cochairs of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, George Stevens, Jr. Where's George? There he is. As well as Margo Lion. Where's Margo? Good to see you. As well as Members of Congress who are here today, all of whom support the arts.

But we are primarily here to acknowledge these incredible individuals. And frankly, this is just fun for me because I feel like I know you all, because I've enjoyed your performances; your writings have fundamentally changed me—I think for the better, Marilynne. I believe that.

At first glance, this is a pretty diverse group. We've got incredible singers and dancers; we have poets and producers, musicians, playwrights, scholars. They come from all across the country, all around the world. And yet, for all their differences, today's honorees have one thing in common, and that is, they are teachers. Whether they realize it or not, they've taught us about ourselves and about our world.

American philosopher Will Durant once wrote that "the aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance." And that's an extraordinary skill: to tell the untold stories of history, to reveal the sculpture that's waiting there in a block of stone, to transform written music into song, to make it look like those planes in space are actually flying like they are. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying, I remember when I first saw "Star Wars." [*Laughter*] There's a whole generation that thinks special effects always looked like they do today. [*Laughter*] But it used to be you'd see, like, the string—[*laughter*]—on the little model spaceships. Anyway, I'm being led astray. [*Laughter*]

Because the arts and the humanities aren't just a source of entertainment. They challenge us to think and to question and to discover, to seek that inward significance, and that helps us grow and to change and to reach new heights and to understand each other at a time when the world is constantly crying for the capacity to bridge that gap and speak to people who aren't like us. And that's exactly what these artists and these humanists have done by working hard, developing their craft, following their dreams, never giving up.

Somebody like Allen Toussaint, who is being honored here for his incredible contributions to the rhythm and blues and jazz music of his beloved New Orleans. After his hometown was battered by Katrina and Allen was forced to evacuate, he did something even more important for his city: He went back. And since then, Allen's devoted his musical talent to lifting up and building up a city. And today, he's taking the stage all over the world, with all kinds of incredible talent, doing everything he can to revive the legendary soul of the Big Easy.

Somebody like Ernest Gaines, who grew up as descendent of sharecroppers in the South and farming the same land as his ancestors. He did not let that define his future. Instead, he took that experience and used it to help fill in gaps in American literature with the stories of African American life. And then, Ernest moved back to Louisiana onto the very same land he and his family had once worked. And

he spent more than 20 years teaching college students to find their own voices and reclaiming some of the stories of their own families and their own lives.

Somebody like Joan Didion, who rightly has earned distinction as one of the most celebrated American writers of her generation. I'm surprised she hasn't already gotten this award. [*Laughter*] But in her early years, she was in school only sporadically, basically taught herself how to read while she and her family followed her Army office father around the country. She obviously learned quickly. She won a contest for Vogue in college, gave up her dream of being an oceanographer; writing became her world. And today, decades into career, she remains one of our sharpest and most respected observers of American politics and culture.

What's true for those three is true for all the recipients here. So many of you have touched me and touched Michelle, and now we're trying to get them to—Malia and Sasha—to see some of Anna's work or read "Gilead" because we want to share that, because we think it was important to us.

And we were—we celebrate people like our honorees here today not just because of their talent, but because they create something new. They create a new space and that becomes a lasting contribution to American life. And that's true for all of these honorees.

So together, the men and women with us today have helped us appreciate individual talent, but as I said earlier, they've also helped us to bridge our differences: to recognize all the things we share as Americans, whether it's arts or humanities or sports.

Frank, I grew up reading Sports Illustrated, and I think it was very good for me. I don't know about you. [*Laughter*] Because all these endeavors, they don't discriminate, they don't prejudge; they speak to all of us equally if we're open to it. They're part of all of our common heritage. They convey all these distinct voices and emotions and stories, and that's us. That's who we are.

So for more than 200 years, that culture has helped shape our views of democracy and freedom and tolerance and progress. Sometimes, the observations or the incredible art or scholarship that's been done by these honorees are overlooked, but somewhere, they're having an impact. And like Bobby Kennedy talked about, they create "ripples of hope." They're like stones in a lake, and it emanates, and we never know exactly how—or who will be touched by it. But it makes a difference. And it's made us better.

And the work that we honor today, the lifetime achievement of these artists and these scholars, reminds us that the human imagination is still the most powerful tool that we have as a people. That's why we celebrate their creativity and the fundamental optimism, the notion that if they work that hard, somebody will actually pay attention. And that's why we have to remain committed to the dreamers and the creators and innovators who fuel that progress and help us light the way ahead, because our children, our grandchildren deserve to grow up in a country where their dreams know no bounds and their ambitions extend as far as their talents and hard work can take them. And it's important that they have examples, people who've carved out a path for them.

So I want to thank today's honorees for doing their part to foster that spirit, to enrich our entire Nation. Every one of them has helped us see beyond outward appearances and appreciate the significant—the significance of what's within. And for that we are incredibly grateful.

So it is now my privilege to present these medals to each of them as one of our Military Aides reads their citations. Lee.

[*At this point, Maj. S. Lee Meyer, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals, assisted by Maj. Michael Wagner, USA, Army Aide to the President*.]

Let's give our honorees one more big round of applause. Hey! You guys also.

Well, I could not imagine a more deserving group of honorees. We are thrilled to have them here.

Fear not, the party is not over. [*Laughter*] My understanding is the food here at the White House is not bad. [*Laughter*] And we may get some nice tunes from our Marine Band; they can play anything, so feel free to make requests. [*Laughter*]

But to all the honorees, thank you again for enriching our lives in so many different ways. We're going to have an opportunity to see you and your families and take some pictures with the honorees. In the meantime, enjoy the reception. And thank you all. I hope you've enjoyed it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to author Marilynne Robinson, actor and playwright Anna Deavere Smith, and sportswriter Frank Deford, recipients of the National Humanities Medal; and musician and composer Allen Toussaint, and authors Ernest J. Gaines and Joan Didion, recipients of the National Medal of Arts. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

Statement on the Resignation of Janet A. Napolitano as Secretary of Homeland Security
July 12, 2013

I want to thank Secretary Napolitano for her outstanding work on behalf of the American people over the last 4 years. At the Department of Homeland Security, Janet's portfolio has included some of the toughest challenges facing our country. She's worked around the clock to respond to natural disasters, from the Joplin tornado to Hurricane Sandy, helping Americans recover and rebuild. Since day one, Janet has led my administration's effort to secure our borders, deploying a historic number of resources, while also taking steps to make our immigration system fairer and more consistent with our values. And the American people are safer and more secure thanks to Janet's leadership in protecting our homeland against terrorist attacks. I've come to rely on Janet's judgment and advice, but I've also come to value her friendship. And as she begins a new chapter in a remarkable career of public service, I wish her the best of luck.

Statement on Signing Legislation Concerning the Participation of Taiwan in the International Civil Aviation Organization
July 12, 2013

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1151, an Act concerning participation of Taiwan in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The United States fully supports Taiwan's membership in international organizations where statehood is not a requirement for membership and encourages Taiwan's meaningful participation, as appropriate, in organizations where its membership is not possible. My Administration has publicly supported Taiwan's participation at the ICAO and will continue to do so. Consistent with my constitutional authority to conduct foreign affairs, my Administration shall construe the Act to be consistent with the "one China" policy of the United States, which remains unchanged, and shall determine the measures best suited to advance the overall goal of Taiwan's participation in the ICAO. I note that sections 1(b) and 1(c) of the Act contain impermissibly mandatory language purporting to direct the Secretary of State to undertake certain diplomatic initiatives and to report to the Congress on the progress of those

initiatives. Consistent with longstanding constitutional practice, my Administration will interpret and implement these sections in a manner that does not interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct diplomacy and to protect the confidentiality of diplomatic communications.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
July 12, 2013.

NOTE: H.R. 1151, approved July 12, was assigned Public Law No. 113–17.

The President's Weekly Address
July 13, 2013

Hi, everybody. Two weeks ago, a large bipartisan majority of Senators voted to pass commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform, taking an important step towards fixing a broken immigration system once and for all.

Now, this bill was a compromise, and neither side got everything they wanted. But it was largely consistent with the key principles of commonsense reform that most of us in both parties have repeatedly laid out. If passed, the Senate's plan would build on the historic gains we've made in border security over the past 4 years with the most aggressive border security plan in our history. It would offer a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million people who are in this country illegally, a pathway that includes paying penalties, learning English, and going to the end of the line behind everyone trying to come here legally. And it would modernize our legal immigration system to make it more consistent with our values.

The Senate's plan would also provide a big boost to our recovery. And on Wednesday, we released a report detailing exactly how big a boost that would be. The report is based on the findings of independent, nonpartisan economists and experts who concluded that, if the Senate's plan becomes law, our economy will be 5-percent larger in two decades compared to the status quo. That's $1.4 trillion added to our economy just by fixing our immigration system.

Here in America, we've always been a nation of immigrants. That's what's kept our workforce dynamic, our businesses on the cutting edge, and our economy the strongest in the world. But under the current system, too many smart, hard-working immigrants are prevented from contributing to that success.

Immigration reform would make it easier for highly skilled immigrants and those who study at our colleges and universities to start businesses and create jobs right here in America. Foreign companies would be more likely to invest here. The demand for goods and services would go up, creating more jobs for American workers. Every worker and business would be required to pay their fair share in taxes, reducing our deficit by nearly $850 billion over the next two decades. And since a large portion of those taxes go towards retirement programs that millions of Americans depend on, Social Security would actually get stronger over the long term, adding 2 years to the life of the program's trust fund.

That's what immigration reform would mean for our economy, but only if we act. If we don't do anything to fix our broken system, our workforce will continue to shrink as baby boomers retire. We won't benefit from highly skilled immigrants starting businesses and creating jobs here. American workers will have to make due with lower wages and fewer protections. And without more immigrants and businesses paying their fair share in taxes, our deficit will be higher, and programs like Social Security will be under more strain.

And we've been debating this issue for more than a decade, ever since President Bush first proposed the broad outlines of immigration reform, and I think he gave a very good speech this past week expressing his hope that a bipartisan, comprehensive bill can become law.

If Democrats and Republicans, including President Bush and I, can agree on something,

that's a pretty good place to start. Now the House needs to act so I can sign commonsense immigration reform into law. And if you agree, tell your Representatives that now is the time. Call or e-mail or post on their Facebook walls and ask them to get this done. Because together, we can grow our economy and keep America strong for years to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on July 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on July 13. In the address, the President referred to former President George W. Bush. He also referred to S. 744. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 13.

Statement on the Verdict in *State of Florida* v. *George Zimmerman*
July 14, 2013

The death of Trayvon Martin was a tragedy, not just for his family or for any one community, but for America. I know this case has elicited strong passions. And in the wake of the verdict, I know those passions may be running even higher. But we are a nation of laws, and a jury has spoken. I now ask every American to respect the call for calm reflection from two parents who lost their young son. And as we do, we should ask ourselves if we're doing all we can to widen the circle of compassion and understanding in our own communities. We should ask ourselves if we're doing all we can to stem the tide of gun violence that claims too many lives across this country on a daily basis. We should ask ourselves, as individuals and as a society, how we can prevent future tragedies like this. As citizens, that's a job for all of us. That's the way to honor Trayvon Martin.

NOTE: The statement referred to Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, parents of Trayvon Martin, who was killed by neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman in Sanford, FL, on February 26, 2012.

Remarks at a Ceremony To Present the 5000th Daily Point of Light Award
July 15, 2013

President Obama. Well, good afternoon, everybody. And on behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House.

Twenty-three years ago, President George H.W. Bush began a tradition. He knew that across the country every day, Americans were finding ways to serve each other and give back to their communities, often with very few resources and very little recognition. And President Bush knew that their good works were valuable to the people they helped. But beyond that, he knew that their spirit of service was vital to our national character. So he created an award, the Daily Point of Light Award, to recognize Americans who serve their neighbors and communities in innovative ways that inspire us all.

And for the rest of his Presidency, nearly every single day, President Bush gave someone a Daily Point of Light Award. And after he left the White House, he kept going and going and going. In between skydiving and other activities—[*laughter*]—he kept going, which should come as no surprise, since we're talking about somebody who has served his country in such extraordinary ways. And when you do a parachute jump at the age of 85, not just a parachute jump, but another parachute jump—I believe his seventh—this is somebody who's not going to slow down any time soon.

So today we are extraordinarily honored to be joined by the family that helped build the Points of Light Foundation into the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service. President Bush, Mrs. Bush, Neil Bush,

we want to welcome you. And we also want to recognize Michelle Nunn, the CEO of Points of Light. It's worth applause.

Now, this is not the first time President Bush and I have come together for an event like this. Four years ago, I went down to Texas A&M, where President Bush has his library, to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of Points of Light. And I appreciated the warm welcome—by which I mean the extremely loud "howdy"—that I received. [*Laughter*] I was deeply impressed by how invested the students there are in community service. But most of all, I was moved by how much they love President Bush.

And now we've come together to mark another milestone. As of this minute, 4,999 Points of Light Awards have been presented to individuals and organizations across this country. And so now I have the honor of joining President Bush in presenting number 5,000. [*Applause*] Number 5,000.

About 10 years ago, Floyd Hammer and Kathy Hamilton were getting ready to retire. They had been farming for years. They had earned a break. They planned to sail around the world. And then their friend told them about a special place that they should visit along the way: In a village in Tanzania, a volunteer mission was helping to renovate an HIV/AIDS clinic. And Floyd and Kathy thought it sounded like a worthwhile detour.

When they arrived in Tanzania, the country was in the third year of a brutal drought. People were starving and dying. Many of them were children. And having seen this, Kathy and Floyd simply had to do something about it. And so their vision of a leisurely retirement was replaced by a new mission: fighting global hunger.

Today, the nonprofit they created, Outreach, has distributed free meals to hungry children here in the United States and in more than 15 countries worldwide: to date, more than 233 million meals. They've gone to see many of the kids that they met in Tanzania grow up healthy and strong. And this work, they say, is the most rewarding thing they've ever done. And I have to say, having just been to Tanzania with Michelle, we can attest to how important this kind of work is, how it changes lives.

It's also fitting that later this week, on July 18, people around the world will celebrate the legacy of the magnificent public servant, Nelson Mandela, by performing acts of public and community service. And as people look for examples, Outreach provides an extraordinary demonstration of how service can lift people's lives.

And so if the purpose of this award is to celebrate Americans who work to make our country and a world a better place—not for their own advantage or for any ulterior motives, but just to serve, pure and simple—I can't think of anyone more deserving than Kathy Hamilton and Floyd Hammer.

Now, before we actually present this award, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to honor the man who made this all possible. He hates this, but I'm going to do it anyway. [*Laughter*]

Much has been said about President Bush's own extraordinary life of service, but I'm not sure everybody fully appreciates how much he's done to strengthen our country's tradition of service. In addition to this award, he created the first White House office dedicated to promoting voluntarism, and he championed and signed the National and Community Service Act. By Washington standards, it was a modest law. It involved little money; President Bush signed it with little fanfare. But looking back, we see that it sparked a national movement. By laying the groundwork for the Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, it gave tens of millions of Americans meaningful opportunities to serve.

And today, thanks to those programs and others like them, and thanks to the passion of leaders like President Bush and citizens who found the same passion over the years, voluntarism has gone from something some people do some of the time to something lots of people do as a regular part of their lives.

Since 1989, the number of Americans who volunteer has grown by more than 25 million.

Service is up across age groups and across regions. It's now a graduation requirement in many high schools and colleges. It's embedded in the culture of businesses large and small. And speaking for my family, volunteering has brought joy and meaning to Michelle and me and our daughters over the years, and I know that's the case for many of your families too.

This national tradition may seem perfectly ordinary to many Americans, especially those who have grown up during this period. But in fact, it reflects tremendous progress. And today, we can say that our country is a better and a stronger force for good in the world because, more and more, we are a people that serve. And for that, we have to thank President Bush and his better half, Barbara, who is just as committed as her husband to service and has dedicated her life to it as well.

Now, the Presidents who followed President Bush have had the good sense to continue this work, and not just because one of them calls him Dad. [*Laughter*] Even after leaving office, President Clinton and both President Bushes have come together to help people affected by natural disasters here at home and around the world, a reminder that service is not a Democratic or a Republican value, but it's a core part of being an American. And at the White House today, we're proud to carry forward that legacy.

I created the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation to find new ways to use innovation to strengthen service. We expanded the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships—originally created by President George W. Bush—which works closely with religious and community organizations across the country to help Americans in need.

And today I want to announce a new Task Force, with representatives from Cabinet agencies and other departments across the Government, to take a fresh look at how we can better support national service, in particular, on some of our most important national priorities: improving schools, recovering from disasters, and mentoring our kids. And this Task Force will be led by my team here at the White House, along with Wendy Spencer, who is here—the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service—who previously led the volunteer commission in Florida for Governor Jeb Bush. So we've got a whole family thing working. [*Laughter*]

In times of tight budgets and some very tough problems, we know that the greatest resource we have is the limitless energy and ingenuity of our citizens. And when we harness that energy and create more opportunities for Americans to serve, we pay tribute to the extraordinary example set by President Bush.

And just to close on a personal note, Mr. President, I am one of millions of people who have been inspired by your passion and your commitment. You have helped so many Americans discover that they too have something to contribute, that they too have the power to make a difference.

You've described for us those thousand points of light, all the people and organizations spread out all across the country who are like stars brightening the lives of those around them. But given the humility that's defined your life, I suspect it's harder for you to see something that's clear to everybody else around you, and that's how bright a light you shine, how your vision and example have illuminated the path for so many others, how your love of service has kindled a similar love in the hearts of millions here at home and around the world. And frankly, just the fact that you're such a gentleman and such a good and kind person, I think, helps to reinforce that spirit of service.

So, on behalf of all of us, let me just say that we are surely a kinder and gentler nation because of you, and we can't thank you enough. So—[*applause*].

So it is now my great pleasure to join President Bush and all of you in presenting this extraordinary award to an extraordinary couple who have done so much for so many people. We are very grateful to them. Floyd and Kathy, will you please step up and receive your award?

[*At this point, the President presented the award, and Outreach Inc. Secretary Treasurer Kathy Hamilton made brief remarks.*]

President Obama. Now I think we're going to have Neil come up and——

Points of Light Chairman Neil M. Bush. We're going to Dad first.

President Obama. ——going Dad first? Do we have the mike? Here we go.

Former President George H.W. Bush. My remarks are simply to say something nice about Neil, my son. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. [*Inaudible*]

Former President Bush. No, it's not hard to do, and he's been very active in this whole concept of volunteering, helping others. And so it's my privilege then to introduce Neil, and first, of course, thank President and Mrs. Obama for this wonderful hospitality. It's like coming home for Barbara and me. With the rest of you just coming to this magnificent house and being greeted by this superb hospitality knows no bounds.

So thank you all very much. Now, Neil.

[*Points of Light Chairman Bush and Chief Executive Officer Michelle Nunn each made brief remarks.*]

President Obama. Well, thank you very much, Michelle, for your outstanding work. To all the Points of Light Award recipients, we're proud of you, congratulations, and keep up the great work. You inspire us and make us want to do that much more. Especially when you see young people who are already making such a difference and such an impact, it gives you enormous confidence that America, for all its challenges, will always meet them because we've got this incredible character.

And with that, what I want to do is once again thank President and Mrs. Bush for their outstanding leadership. We are so grateful to both of you. I want to thank Neil for his leadership, and I want to make sure that everybody enjoys a reception. And I suspect the food may be pretty good. So—[*laughter*].

So thank you very much, all of you, for being here. All right? Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Floyd Hammer, president, Outreach Inc.; and former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa.

Statement on Senate Action on Executive Branch Nominations
July 16, 2013

I'm pleased that the Senate took action today to move forward on the nominees who have waited far too long for a vote. Over the last 2 years, I've nominated leaders to fill important positions required to do the work of the American people, only to have those positions remain unfilled, not because the nominees were somehow unqualified, but for purely political reasons. I want to thank the Senators from both parties—including Leader Reid, Leader McConnell, and Senator McCain—who have worked together to find a path forward and give these nominees the votes they deserve. In the weeks ahead, I hope the Congress will build on this spirit of cooperation to advance other urgent middle class priorities, including the need to take action to pass commonsense immigration reform and keep interest rates on student loans low for families trying to afford a higher education.

Remarks on Senate Confirmation of Richard A. Cordray as Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
July 17, 2013

The President. Please have a seat. Well, for decades, the middle class in this country was the engine that powered the economy, and that allowed us to all grow together. Hard work paid off. Responsibility was rewarded. It was that basic bargain that made this country great:

that no matter who you are or where you came from, you could make it if you put in enough blood, sweat, and tears.

But over time, a winner-take-all philosophy began to take hold, and it delivered huge rewards to those at the very top, but left everybody else working harder and harder just to stay afloat. A lot of families took on more debt just to keep up. Mortgages were sold that people really didn't understand and, in some cases, couldn't afford. Financial sector was able to make huge bets with other people's money. And that strain of irresponsibility eventually came crashing down on all of us.

Now, I ran for President to restore that basic bargain. I ran because I believed that our economy works best not from the top down, but from the middle out and from the bottom up, where you've got a rising, thriving middle class and ladders of opportunity for everybody.

So, 4 years ago, even as we were working on restoring the economy and dealing with the immediate crisis, we also wanted to figure out how do we set new rules for the road to make sure that a few bad apples in the financial sector couldn't break the law or cheat consumers or put the entire economy at risk.

And I was fortunate, even when I was running for President, to have some friends like Elizabeth Warren, who had already done a lot of academic work on this and had a whole series of ideas about how we might start making sure that consumers were treated better, and as a consequence, take some of the risk out of the system. And because of those conversations and that work, and because of some terrific efforts by other Members in Congress, we were able, for the time in history, to get a consumer watchdog on the job to look out for the interests of everyday Americans. And I am very proud to say that last night Rich Cordray was finally confirmed—[*laughter*]—by the United States Senate to keep serving as America's consumer watchdog and as the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. So we're very pleased about that. So—[*applause*].

Now, I first nominated Rich for this position 2 years ago this week. [*Laughter*] He was eminently qualified. He had the support of Democrats and Republicans from across the country. A majority of State attorneys general from both parties—Rich's former colleagues—called on him to be confirmed. And for 2 years, Republicans in the Senate refused to give Rich a simple yes-or-no vote, not because they didn't think he was the right person for the job, but because they didn't like the law that set up the consumer watchdog in the first place.

But without a director in place, the CFPB would have been severely hampered. And the CFPB wasn't able to give consumers the information they needed to make good, informed decisions. Folks in the financial system who were doing the right thing didn't have much certainty or clear rules of the road. And the CFPB didn't have all the tools it needed to protect consumers against mortgage brokers or credit reporting agencies or debt collectors who were taking advantage of ordinary Americans.

As a consequence, last year, I took steps on my own to temporarily appoint Richard so he could get work—get to work on their behalf. And Americans everywhere are better off because he did. And thanks to not only Rich, but his terrific team—I know many are represented here—we've made real strides, even despite the fact that the agency was hampered by the confirmation process.

And I would argue that part of the reason we were able to finally get Rich confirmed today is because he's shown through his leadership and because of the very hard work that everybody at the CFPB has already done that this is making a difference in the lives of the American people: a positive difference day in, day out. It's hard to argue with success.

So yesterday Richard was officially confirmed. I want to thank Senators from both parties, including Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Senator McCain, for coming together to help get Rich confirmed. And obviously, Elizabeth—who wasn't a Senator when she thought this up, but is now a Senator—she was poking and prodding people for a long time—[*laughter*]—to help make it happen. Senator Reid's leadership, in particular, was obviously

instrumental in getting this done, and I couldn't be more grateful to him.

And together, we're giving Americans a guarantee that the protections they enjoy today will still be around next year and the year after that and the year after that and for years to come.

While we're on the topic of nominations, I also want to thank the Senate for agreeing to give my other nominees who've waited far too long the votes that they deserve. These are all highly qualified men and women who are just ready to go to work for the American people: for students and for seniors, for veterans, for middle class families. Special interests, they'll always have their lobbyists; they'll always have the capacity to tilt the system in their favor. But middle class folks deserve leaders who are going to stand up for them as well on a day-to-day basis in the trenches.

So let me use this opportunity to remind people of what the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau under Rich's leadership can do and has done already, even in some difficult circumstances.

Today, if you want to take out a mortgage or a student loan or a payday loan or you've got a credit reporting agency or debt collector who's causing you problems—maybe they're not playing by the rules, maybe they're taking advantage of you—you have somewhere to go. The CFPB has already addressed more than 175,000 complaints from all across the Nation, giving people an advocate who is working with them when they're dealing with these financial institutions that may not always be thinking about consumers first.

Today, as part of the CFPB's "Know Before You Owe" efforts, students and their parents can get a simple report with the information they need before taking out student loans. And more than 700 colleges have joined to make this information clear and transparent. It's making a difference.

And by the way, if you've noticed that some credit card forms are becoming easier to understand than they used to be, that's because of the work of Rich's team and other folks across this administration have done to make sure that people understand the kinds of debts that they're taking on through their credit cards.

Today, veterans have access to tools that they need to defend against dishonest lenders and mortgage brokers who try to prey on them when they come home from serving their country. Today, seniors are better protected from someone who sees their homes or their retirement savings as an easy target for get-rich-quick schemes.

And thanks to the hard work of folks at the CFPB, so far 6 million Americans have gotten more than $400 million in refunds from companies that engaged in unscrupulous practices.

So this is not just some abstract, theoretical exercise. Families, many of them hard pressed, have money in their pockets—maybe, in some cases, saved a home or were able to send their kids to college—because of the work that Rich and his team is doing right now. And that's money that, oftentimes, families didn't have the power to recover before.

So Americans are better off because of what Rich has done as our consumer watchdog, and his outstanding team is doing each and every day. And by the way, that's just the tangible benefits that we know of, that $400 million in refunds. But part of what happens is when you've got a watchdog, people don't try as many things. And everybody starts tightening up their practices and—because they know somebody is watching. And so that has ripple effects throughout our economy.

So Americans everywhere are better off because of the work that these folks have done. And now that Rich has gotten the yes-or-no vote he deserved, businesses and consumers have more certainty than they did before that this will continue.

So we've come a long way over the last 4½ years. Our economy is growing. Our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs over the past 40 months. We've locked in new safeguards to protect against another crisis, and we are making sure that we are doing everything we can to change the incentives inside the financial system and try to end tax-funded—taxpayer-funded bailouts for good. And even though more

work remains, our system is fairer, and it's more sound than it was when the crisis hit.

Of course, we've still got a long way to go to restore that basic bargain, to restore that sense of security that too many middle class families still are fighting to rebuild. But if we just keep letting people like Rich do their jobs, if we let all these incredible young people know that you're going to keep on going for a long time, you're building something that—it will last beyond our Government's service, and we'll be providing protections for generations to come. And if we keep focused on that north star—a rising, thriving middle class, an economy where prosperity is broad based—then I'm confident that we're ultimately going to get to where we need to go.

So I want to thank everybody. And I just want to give Rich a quick chance to say something.

Director Cordray. Thank you. I want to thank the President—this President, in particular, who has believed in us from the beginning. I want to thank the Senate and the Senators for the chance to persevere and be confirmed as the Director of this Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. It's all I ever asked for—all I ever worked for—was to have a chance to have an up-or-down vote on the merits, and I thank them for that.

For nearly 2 years, as the President indicated, we have been focused on making consumer finance markets work better for the American people. Today's action—the action—I was sworn in by the Vice President this morning and the Senate confirmation—means that there will be certainty for those markets and for the industries we oversee.

For me, it also reaffirms that our central responsibility is to stand on the side of consumers and see that they're treated fairly, just as the President described it. It's something that people deserve. It's something that they want and need. And we're there to try to provide it.

We will continue that essential work, and each one of us—those of us here and those of us in Washington and around the country who work for this new Consumer Bureau, including most especially myself—we're grateful for the opportunity that you've given us to serve our country in this important way.

Thank you. Thank you, sir.

The President. I'm proud of you. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Elizabeth A. Warren, in her former capacity as Assistant to the President and Special Adviser to the Secretary of the Treasury on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Statement on Nelson Mandela International Day
July 17, 2013

On behalf of our family and the people of the United States, Michelle and I extend our warmest wishes and prayers to Nelson Mandela on the occasion of his 95th birthday, as well as to Graça Machel, the Mandela family, and the Government and people of South Africa as they mark the fifth annual Nelson Mandela International Day. Our family was deeply moved by our visit to Madiba's former cell on Robben Island during our recent trip to South Africa, and we will forever draw strength and inspiration from his extraordinary example of moral courage, kindness, and humility.

On Nelson Mandela International Day, people everywhere have the opportunity to honor Madiba through individual and collective acts of service. Through our own lives, by heeding his example, we can honor the man who showed his own people—and the world—the path to justice, equality, and freedom. May Nelson Mandela's life of service to others and his unwavering commitment to equality, reconciliation, and human dignity continue to be a beacon for each future generation seeking a more just and prosperous world.

NOTE: The statement referred to former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa and his wife Graça Machel. The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor
July 17, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication stating that the national emergency and related measures dealing with the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor are to continue in effect beyond July 22, 2013.

Although Liberia has made advances to promote democracy, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone recently convicted Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the actions and policies of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons, in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources and their removal from Liberia and secreting of Liberian funds and property, could still challenge Liberia's efforts to strengthen its democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institutions and resources. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
July 17, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
July 18, 2013

Thank you so much, everybody. Well, I want to thank Morgan for that introduction. And I want to thank all of you for being here. There are a couple of people that I want to make sure to especially acknowledge. First of all, the leader of the Democrats in the House of Representatives and somebody who worked harder than just about anybody to get the Affordable Care Act into law: Nancy Pelosi. Please give Nancy a round of applause.

We have some outstanding Members of Congress here, some mayors and elected officials who are here. I want to give a special shout-out; I'm not going to introduce all of them because it would take too much time, and I might miss somebody. But there is one person who's standing in front—sitting in front, who I want to acknowledge just because he has served for decades, and for decades fought to make sure that everybody had affordable, accessible coverage, and we're so proud of him: John Dingell, Congressman from Michigan.

So I want to welcome everybody to the White House. Every day, across the country and certainly here in the White House, there are people who are working as we speak to implement the Affordable Care Act and to deliver

the security of quality, affordable health care to more Americans.

The good news is that starting October 1, new online marketplaces will allow consumers to go online and compare private health care insurance plans just like you'd compare, over the Internet, the best deal on flat-screen TVs or cars or any other product that is important to your lives. And you're going to see competition in ways that we haven't seen before. Insurance companies will compete for your business. And in States that are working hard to make sure this law delivers for their people, what we're seeing is that consumers are getting a hint of how much money they're potentially going to save because of this law. In States like California, Oregon, Washington, new competition, new choices, market forces are pushing costs down.

Just yesterday State officials in New York announced that average premiums for consumers who buy insurance in their new marketplace will be at least 50-percent lower next year than they are today. Think about that: 50-percent lower. So for people like Morgan who are self-employed, who have to buy on the individual market, they're suddenly going to see opportunities not just for the rebates we discussed, but also for even greater savings in their monthly premiums.

So if you already buy insurance on the individual market—meaning that you don't get insurance through a big group plan through your employer—that could mean thousands of dollars a year that can go towards paying a mortgage or putting a kid through college or saving for retirement. And what this means is that hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who don't have insurance will finally be able to afford it because these exchanges, this big pool is going to reduce the cost. And you may qualify for health care tax credits; middle class families will potentially qualify for these credits that will bring the cost down even more.

So this is just an example of how the Affordable Care Act is doing what it's designed to do: deliver more choices, better benefits, a check on rising costs, and higher quality health care. That's what it was designed to do, and we're already seeing those effects take place.

Now, I mention all this because yesterday, despite all the evidence that the law is working the way it was supposed to for middle class Americans, Republicans in the House of Representatives voted for nearly the 40th time—[*laughter*]—to dismantle it. We've got a lot of problems in this country, and there's a lot of work that Congress needs to do: get a farm bill passed, get immigration reform done, make sure we've got a budget in place that invests in our children and our future. And yet, instead, we're refighting these old battles. [*Laughter*] Sometimes, I just try to figure out why. Maybe they think it's good politics. But part of our job here is not to always think about politics. Part of our job here is to sometimes think about getting work done on behalf of the American people, on behalf of the middle class and those who are striving to get into the middle class.

And so the progress that we're seeing in California and Washington and Oregon and now New York, that's progress that we want to make sure we're seeing all across the country. Because there are still millions of people out there who not only want to get health insurance, but many who have health insurance who deserve a better deal and deserve the kinds of savings that the Affordable Care Act will offer.

Now, if you're one of the 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance—could be through your employer or through Medicare or through Medicaid—you already have an array of new benefits in place. You don't have to wait until October 1. You're already getting benefits even if you don't know that it's because of the Affordable Care Act. You're getting better protections. You're getting more value for each dollar that you spend on your health care.

And that last point—the issue of getting better value for your buck—is what I want to focus on today. For years, too many middle class families saw their health care costs go up and up and up, without much explanation as to why or how their money was being spent. But today, because of the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies have to spend at least 80

percent of every dollar that you pay in premiums on your health care: not on overhead, not on profits, but on you.

Now, many insurance companies are already exceeding that target, and they're bringing down premiums and providing better value to their customers. But those that aren't now actually have to reimburse you. If they're not spending your premium dollars on your health care—at least 80 percent of it—they've got to give you some money back.

Last year, millions of Americans opened letters from their insurance companies, but instead of the usual dread that comes from getting a bill—[*laughter*]—they were pleasantly surprised with a check. In 2012, 13 million rebates went out in all 50 States. Another 8.5 [million]* rebates are being sent out this summer, averaging around 100 bucks each. And for families like Morgan's that are working hard, every dollar counts. It makes a difference.

As she said during her introduction, she'd been buying insurance on the individual market in Maryland for years. After she got a rebate for the first time—and I'm quoting Morgan now—she said, "It felt like someone was actually being held accountable for the dollars I was spending on health care." That's one of core principles of the Affordable Care Act: holding insurance companies and providers accountable so that we all get a better deal.

Dan Hart, who's here from Chicago, had read these rebates were happening. But he didn't think anything of it until he got a check in the mail for $136. And Dan is a father of two, and as any parent will tell you, those kids, they suck up a lot of money. So—[*laughter*]. Am I right? [*Laughter*] Absolutely. So he used his rebate to pay some bills.

Rick Shewell and Claudia Diamond co-own a stationery store in Arlington, Virginia. They knew about the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, but Rick said, "I figured I'd never see the money." So it was a complete surprise when they got a rebate for $320, put that money right back into their small business.

And this is happening all across the country, and it's happening because of the Affordable Care Act. Hasn't been reported on a lot. I bet if you took a poll, most folks wouldn't know when that check comes in that this was because of Obamacare—[*laughter*]—that they got this extra money in their pockets. But that's what's happening.

Now, even if you don't get a rebate, even if you didn't get a rebate, there's a good chance that these reforms are helping you as well, because one easy way to meet the goal of spending 80 percent of every dollar on care is to charge less for your care. Now, we've got more work to do to get rising health care costs under control. And some of the gains that we've made, some of the progress we've made in slowing the rise of health care costs isn't always passed on to workers. Sometimes, companies may keep it, and they are charging their employees a higher copay or higher deductible or in some way shifting some costs onto some workers.

But generally speaking, what we've seen is that health care costs have slowed drastically in a lot of areas since we've passed the Affordable Care Act. We've got a lot more work to do, but health care inflation is not skyrocketing the way it was. And because of this new rule, because of the fact that it improves the value of the coverage that you purchase, last year alone, Americans saved $3.4 billion in lower premiums. That's $3.4 billion on top of these rebates.

So that's just one way this law is helping middle class families. But it represents everything the Affordable Care Act means for folks who already have insurance: better benefits, stronger protections, more bang for your buck—the basic notion that you ought to get what you pay for.

Now, I recognize that there are still a lot of folks—in this town, at least—who are rooting for this law to fail. Some of them seem to think this law is about me. It's not. I already have really good health care. [*Laughter*]

It's about the dad in Maryland who, for the first time ever, saw his family's premiums go

* White House correction.

down instead of up. It's about the grandma in Oregon whose free mammogram caught her breast cancer before it had a chance to spread. It's about the mom in Arizona who can afford heart surgery for her little girl now that the lifetime cap on her coverage has been lifted. It's about the folks here today who got a little bit of relief.

And I'm curious: What do opponents of this law thinks the folks here today should do with the money they were reimbursed? Should they send it back to the insurance companies? Do they think that was a bad idea to make sure that insurance companies are being held accountable? I know that's not what these folks think.

So the upshot is, the American people deserve a fair shot. They expect businesses to play by a fair set of rules. And that's why this fight is so important. Our broken health care system threatened the hopes and the dreams of families and businesses across the country who feared that one illness or one accident could cost them everything they'd spent a lifetime building. And step by step, we're fixing that system.

It's hard. This is a big country, and the health care industry is massive, and there are tons of providers. And so as we implement, there are going to be glitches, and there are going to be certain States that, for political reasons, are resisting implementation. And we're just steadily working through all that stuff.

The same was true when Medicare was started. The same was true when Social Security got started. There were folks who, for political reasons, resisted implementation. But once it got set up, people started saying, this is a pretty good deal, it gives me a little more security. It's part of that basic bargain that if you work hard, if you're doing the right thing, that you can get ahead in this country and that you can provide some basic protections for your family.

And health care is at the heart of it; it's part of it. Affordable health care is not some privilege just for the few. It's a basic right that everybody should be able to enjoy.

So we're going to keep fighting to secure that right, to make sure that every American gets the care that they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford. That's the America we believe in. That's what families deserve. That's what we're going to keep on working to deliver. We're going to keep on working to make sure many people around this country who are already paying premiums are getting cheaper prices, that the money is being actually spent on their health care, that you're not having to worry about the fine print, and that if you don't have health insurance, you finally are in a position to get some at an affordable price, to give you and your family the kind of security you deserve.

That's something everybody should support. That's not something that should be subject to politics. If the folks who have been trying to make political hay out of this thing, if they had some better ideas, I've already told them, I'm happy to hear them. But I haven't heard any so far. [*Laughter*] What I've heard is just the same old song and dance. We're just going to blow through that stuff and just keep on doing the right thing for the American people.

So thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Silver Spring, MD, resident Morgan Theriot; and Rick Shewell, president, and Claudia Diamond, vice president, In Store Stationers, LLC.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Thomas E. Perez as Secretary of Labor

July 18, 2013

I welcome today's confirmation of Tom Perez to serve as Secretary of Labor. Tom has lived the American dream himself and has dedicated his career to keeping it within reach for hard-working families across the country. At the Department of Labor, Tom will help us

continue to grow our economy, help businesses create jobs, make sure workers have the skills those jobs require, and ensure safe workplaces and economic opportunity for all.

I want to thank the Senate once again for agreeing to move forward on Tom and the other nominees who have waited far too long for the yes-or-no votes they deserve.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Regina McCarthy as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency
July 18, 2013

I am pleased that today the Senate took bipartisan action to confirm Gina McCarthy as the next Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. With years of experience at the State and local level, Gina is a proven leader who knows how to build bipartisan support for commonsense environmental solutions that protect the health and safety of our kids while promoting economic growth. Over the past 4 years, I have valued Gina's counsel, and I look forward to having her in my Cabinet as we work to slow the effects of climate change and leave a cleaner environment for future generations.

Remarks on the Verdict in *State of Florida* v. *George Zimmerman*
July 19, 2013

Well, I wanted to come out here, first of all, to tell you that Jay is prepared for all your questions and is very much looking forward to the session. The second thing is I want to let you know that over the next couple of weeks, there's going to obviously be a whole range of issues—immigration, economics, et cetera—we'll try to arrange a fuller press conference to address your questions.

The reason I actually wanted to come out today is not to take questions, but to speak to an issue that obviously has gotten a lot of attention over the course of the last week: the issue of the Trayvon Martin ruling. I gave—in a preliminary statement right after the ruling on Sunday. But watching the debate over the course of the last week, I thought it might be useful for me to expand on my thoughts a little bit.

First of all, I want to make sure that, once again, I send my thoughts and prayers as well as Michelle's to the family of Trayvon Martin and to remark on the incredible grace and dignity with which they've dealt with the entire situation. I can only imagine what they're going through, and it's remarkable how they've handled it.

The second thing I want to say is to reiterate what I said on Sunday, which is, there are going to be a lot of arguments about the legal issues in the case; I'll let all the legal analysts and talking heads address those issues. The judge conducted the trial in a professional manner. The prosecution and the defense made their arguments. The juries were properly instructed that in a case such as this, reasonable doubt was relevant, and they rendered a verdict. And once the jury has spoken, that's how our system works. But I did want to just talk a little bit about context and how people have responded to it and how people are feeling.

When Trayvon Martin was first shot, I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is, Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away.

There are very few African American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me. There are

very few African American men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. That happens to me, at least before I was a Senator. There are very few African Americans who haven't had the experience of getting on an elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often.

And I don't want to exaggerate this, but those sets of experiences inform how the African American community interprets what happened one night in Florida. And it's inescapable for people to bring those experiences to bear. The African American community is also knowledgeable that there is a history of racial disparities in the application of our criminal laws, everything from the death penalty to enforcement of our drug laws. And that ends up having an impact in terms of how people interpret the case.

Now, this isn't to say that the African American community is naive about the fact that African American young men are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system, that they're disproportionately both victims and perpetrators of violence. It's not to make excuses for that fact, although Black folks do interpret the reasons for that in a historical context. They understand that some of the violence that takes place in poor Black neighborhoods around the country is born out of a very violent past in this country and that the poverty and dysfunction that we see in those communities can be traced to a very difficult history.

And so the fact that sometimes that's unacknowledged adds to the frustration. And the fact that a lot of African American boys are painted with a broad brush and the excuse is given, "Well, there are these statistics out there that show that African American boys are more violent." Using that as an excuse to then see sons treated differently causes pain.

I think the African American community is also not naive in understanding that, statistically, somebody like Trayvon Martin was statistically more likely to be shot by a peer than he was by somebody else. So folks understand the challenges that exist for African American boys. But they get frustrated, I think, if they feel that there's no context for it and that context is being denied. And that all contributes, I think, to a sense that if a White male teen was involved in the same kind of scenario, that from top to bottom, both the outcome and the aftermath might have been different.

Now, the question for me at least, and I think for a lot of folks, is where do we take this? How do we learn some lessons from this and move in a positive direction? I think it's understandable that there have been demonstrations and vigils and protests, and some of that stuff is just going to have to work its way through, as long as it remains nonviolent. If I see any violence, then I will remind folks that that dishonors what happened to Trayvon Martin and his family. But beyond protests or vigils, the question is, are there some concrete things that we might be able to do?

I know that Eric Holder is reviewing what happened down there, but I think it's important for people to have some clear expectations here. Traditionally, these are issues of State and local government, the criminal code. And law enforcement is traditionally done at the State and local levels, not at the Federal levels.

That doesn't mean, though, that as a nation, we can't do some things that I think would be productive. So let me just give a couple of specifics that I'm still bouncing around with my staff; so we're not rolling out some five-point plan, but some areas where I think all of us could potentially focus.

Number one, precisely because law enforcement is often determined at the State and local level, I think it would be productive for the Justice Department, Governors, mayors to work with law enforcement about training at the State and local levels in order to reduce the kind of mistrust in the system that sometimes currently exists.

When I was in Illinois, I passed racial profiling legislation, and it actually did just two simple things. One, it collected data on traffic stops and the race of the person who was stopped. But the other thing was it resourced us training police departments across the State on how to think about potential racial bias and

ways to further professionalize what they were doing. And initially, the police departments across the State were resistant, but actually, they came to recognize that if it was done in a fair, straightforward way, that it would allow them to do their jobs better and communities would have more confidence in them and, in turn, be more helpful in applying the law. And obviously, law enforcement has got a very tough job.

So that's one area where I think there are a lot of resources and best practices that could be brought to bear if State and local governments are receptive. And I think a lot of them would be. And let's figure out, are there ways for us to push out that kind of training?

Along the same lines, I think it would be useful for us to examine some State and local laws to see if it—if they are designed in such a way that they may encourage the kinds of altercations and confrontations and tragedies that we saw in the Florida case, rather than diffuse potential altercations.

I know that there's been commentary about the fact that the "Stand Your Ground" laws in Florida were not used as a defense in the case. On the other hand, if we're sending a message as a society in our communities that someone who is armed potentially has the right to use those firearms even if there's a way for them to exit from a situation, is that really going to be contributing to the kind of peace and security and order that we'd like to see?

And for those who resist that idea that we should think about something like these "Stand Your Ground" laws, I'd just ask people to consider, if Trayvon Martin was of age and armed, could he have stood his ground on that sidewalk? And do we actually think that he would have been justified in shooting Mr. Zimmerman, who had followed him in a car, because he felt threatened? And if the answer to that question is at least ambiguous, then it seems to me that we might want to examine those kinds of laws.

Number three—and this is a long-term project—we need to spend some time in thinking about how do we bolster and reinforce our African American boys. And this is something that Michelle and I talk a lot about. There are a lot of kids out there who need help who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement. And is there more that we can do to give them the sense that their country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them?

I'm not naive about the prospects of some grand new Federal program. I'm not sure that that's what we're talking about here. But I do recognize that as President, I've got some convening power, and there are a lot of good programs that are being done across the country on this front. And for us to be able to gather together business leaders and local elected officials and clergy and celebrities and athletes and figure out how are we doing a better job helping young African American men feel that they're a full part of this society and that they've got pathways and avenues to succeed, I think that would be a pretty good outcome from what was obviously a tragic situation. And we're going to spend some time working on that and thinking about that.

And then, finally, I think it's going to be important for all of us to do some soul-searching. There has been talk about, should we convene a conversation on race? I haven't seen that be particularly productive when politicians try to organize conversations. They end up being stilted and politicized, and folks are locked into the positions they already have. On the other hand, in families and churches and workplaces, there's a possibility that people are a little bit more honest, and at least you ask yourself your own questions about, am I wringing as much bias out of myself as I can? Am I judging people as much as I can, based on not the color of their skin, but the content of their character? That would, I think, be an appropriate exercise in the wake of this tragedy.

And let me just leave you with a final thought that, as difficult and challenging as this whole episode has been for a lot of people, I don't want us to lose sight that things are getting better. Each successive generation seems to be making progress in changing attitudes when it comes to race. It doesn't mean we're in a postracial society. It doesn't mean that racism is eliminated. But when I talk to Malia and Sa-

sha, and I listen to their friends, and I see them interact, they're better than we are—they're better than we were—on these issues. And that's true in every community that I've visited all across the country.

And so we have to be vigilant, and we have to work on these issues. And those of us in authority should be doing everything we can to encourage the better angels of our nature, as opposed to using these episodes to heighten divisions. But we should also have confidence that kids these days, I think, have more sense than we did back then and certainly more than our parents did or our grandparents did, and that along this long, difficult journey, we're becoming a more perfect Union; not a perfect Union, but a more perfect Union. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:33 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney; and Seminole County Circuit Judge Debra S. Nelson of Florida.

Statement on the Federal Communications Commission's Vote on the Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries
July 19, 2013

Today the Federal Communications Commission took a first, important step toward realizing our vision of making 21st-century classrooms available to every student in America. Preparing our Nation's students with the skills they need to get good jobs and compete with countries around the world will rely increasingly on interactive, individualized learning experiences driven by new technology. To get there, we have to build connected classrooms that support modern teaching, investments we know our international competitors are already making. Our ConnectED initiative, which has widespread support from Republicans, Democrats, educators, business and tech leaders, and State and local officials, will ensure that the Federal Government can provide schools with the infrastructure and tools they need to deliver this competitive digital education for every student in the United States. That is the process that the FCC began today, and we look forward to the next steps in this effort as we move closer to our goal of getting 99 percent of America's students connected to the Internet through high-speed broadband and high-speed wireless within 5 years.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations
July 19, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to transnational criminal organizations declared in Executive Order 13581 of July 24, 2011, is to continue in effect beyond July 24, 2013.

The activities of significant transnational criminal organizations have reached such scope and gravity that they threaten the stability of international political and economic systems. Such organizations are becoming increasingly sophisticated and dangerous to the

United States; they are increasingly entrenched in the operations of certain foreign governments and the international financial system, thereby weakening democratic institutions, degrading the rule of law, and undermining economic markets. These organizations facilitate and aggravate violent civil conflicts and increasingly facilitate the activities of other dangerous persons.

The activities of significant transnational criminal organizations continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13581 with respect to transnational criminal organizations.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address
July 20, 2013

Hi, everybody. Three years ago this weekend, we put into place tough new rules of the road for the financial sector so that irresponsible behavior on the part of a few could never again cause a crisis that harms millions of middle class families.

As part of that reform, we set up the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the first-ever independent consumer watchdog with one job: to protect families from that sort of behavior.

Two years ago, I nominated a man named Rich Cordray, a former attorney general from Ohio, to run this consumer protection bureau. But Republicans in the Senate refused to give him a simple up-or-down vote, not because they didn't think he was the right person for the job, but because they didn't like the law that set up the consumer watchdog in the first place.

So last year, I acted on my own to put him in charge, because without a Director, the CFPB couldn't use all the tools at its disposal to protect consumers from shady mortgage lenders or unscrupulous credit reporting agencies or predatory lenders who targeted veterans and seniors. And I'm pleased to say that Rich Cordray was finally confirmed this week by a bipartisan vote.

Because of the work that's been done at the CFPB over the past 2 years, today, mortgage lenders, student lenders, payday lenders, and credit reporting and debt collection agencies all face greater scrutiny. And if they don't play by the rules, you now have somewhere to go to get some measure of justice. In fact, the CFPB has already addressed more than 175,000 complaints from every State.

Today, as part of the CFPB's "Know Before You Owe" efforts, students and their parents can get a simple report with the information they need to make informed decisions before taking out student loans, and more than 700 colleges have stepped up to make this information clear and transparent. And if you've noticed that some credit card forms are actually easier to understand than they used to be, that's because of the work that Rich's team and others in the administration have done.

Today, veterans have the tools they need to defend against dishonest lenders and mortgage brokers who try to prey on them when they come home. Seniors are better protected from someone who sees their home or retirement savings as an easy target. And thanks to the hard work of folks at the CFPB, so far 6 million Americans have gotten more than $400 million in refunds from companies that engaged in unscrupulous practices. That's money we didn't have the power to recover before.

You know, we've come a long way over the past 4½ years. Our economy's growing. Our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs in the past 40 months. We've locked in new safeguards to protect against another crisis and end

bailouts for good. And even though more work remains, our financial system is more fair and much more sound than it was.

We've still got a long way to go to restore the sense of security that too many middle class families are still fighting to rebuild. But if we keep moving forward with our eyes fixed on that north star of a growing middle class, then I'm confident we'll get to where we need to go.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on July 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on July 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 20.

Statement on the Death of Helen A. Thomas
July 20, 2013

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Helen Thomas. Helen was a true pioneer, opening doors and breaking down barriers for generations of women in journalism. She covered every White House since President Kennedy's, and during that time, she never failed to keep Presidents—myself included—on their toes. What made Helen the Dean of the White House Press Corps was not just the length of her tenure, but her fierce belief that our democracy works best when we ask tough questions and hold our leaders to account. Our thoughts are with Helen's family, her friends, and the colleagues who respected her so deeply.

Statement Congratulating Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, of the United Kingdom on the Birth of Their Son
July 22, 2013

Michelle and I are so pleased to congratulate the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on the joyous occasion of the birth of their first child. We wish them all the happiness and blessings parenthood brings. The child enters the world at a time of promise and opportunity for our two nations. Given the special relationship between us, the American people are pleased to join with the people of the United Kingdom as they celebrate the birth of the young Prince.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prince George Alexander Louis.

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Event
July 22, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, OFA! Thank you. All right, everybody, sit down, sit down. Thank you. You get me embarrassed. [*Laughter*] It is good to see all of you. I miss all you guys. I miss you. I missed you.

First of all, can everybody please give Bill a big round of applause for the great introduction and the great work he's doing. So proud of him.

I want to thank our outstanding partners: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, for being here, and our outstanding Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, for being here.

But mainly, I just wanted to see all you guys—[*laughter*]—and say hey.

Audience members. Hey!

The President. Michelle says hey.

Audience members. Hey!

The President. The girls, they went out to camp. [*Laughter*] We're a little lonely at home

right now. [*Laughter*] But Bo is still there. Bo says hey. [*Laughter*]

And it's wonderful just to see all of you from all across the country. I know you guys have all been working hard today, all kinds of training, all kinds of new ideas. Everybody is sharing approaches to how we get folks involved in our democracy and our country. And I could not be prouder of not just the work that you did before the campaign and during the campaign, but more importantly, the work that you're doing now after the campaign. It's inspiring to me.

And I had a chance to see some of your fellow organizers backstage and talk to them, and it just reminded me of what an incredible cross-section of people we have involved, from rural areas and big cities, educators, businesspeople, folks who are just committed to making sure that the promise of America is not just left to the professionals here in Washington, because that can cause problems—[*laughter*]—but that folks all across the country are consistently involved and engaged and offering their ideas and pushing and prodding the political system to make sure it's responsive to families.

And since I first ran for office, I've always said that running for office is not just about getting elected. Now, I believe in winning; winning is good. [*Laughter*] But you run for office and you win so that you can actually get things done. All right? It's the beginning and not the end of a process. It puts you in a position to then deliver on behalf of the folks that you're fighting for.

And I ran in 2008 and I ran in 2012 because I believed that America was forged out of this basic bargain: the idea that if you're willing to work hard, if you're willing to put in the effort, if you're willing to sacrifice and make hard decisions and delay gratification, that if you do all those things, you can make it here in America, regardless of where you come from, what you look like, who you love, what your last name is. That was the idea behind the first campaign, and that was the idea behind everything I did after I was President.

And the good news is, because of the work that we've been able to do together, and more importantly, thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we have made enormous progress over the last 5 years. Things have changed for the better, just like we sought to bring about when we worked so hard back in 2007, 2008.

But now we've got to keep the momentum going. In some ways, what we've done is clear away the rubble of this incredible crisis that we went through. And now the challenge is to get back to that first order of business: the challenges that were facing families even before the financial crisis and the great recession hit.

And we've gotten back on level ground, but now we've got to keep climbing, we've got to keep going, because there are still too many of our friends and our neighbors and family members who are out there hurting, who are still struggling, who are still treading water. The ground beneath our feet is a little firmer than it was, but we've got a long way to go before middle class families feel secure and before those who are willing to strive to get into the middle class have more ladders of opportunity.

So our businesses have created, for example, 7.2 million jobs over the last 40 months. Fastest job growth that we've seen since 1999, which is good. But way too many folks out there are still looking for work. And for those who were lucky enough to have a job, wages and incomes are still flatlined, whereas for the top 1 percent, they're still seeing massive increases in their wealth and incomes. So we've got growing inequality in our society and a continued sense of insecurity when it comes to ordinary families.

We've seen record numbers of people go to college. But every young person you meet, they talk about the incredible debt burdens that they're carrying as soon as they graduate, and they wonder whether or not they're going to be able to pay it off given their employment prospects.

We've seen health care costs decline—or health care inflation decline since we put the Affordable Care Act into place. But a lot of

those savings still haven't been enjoyed by a lot of ordinary families, haven't been passed on to workers.

And so across the board, we've made progress, but we haven't yet delivered on restoring fully that basic bargain that we believed in: the idea that if you act responsibly, you're willing to work hard, that you can make it.

So because we've got a lot more work to do, on Wednesday, I'm going to go back to Galesburg, Illinois. We've got any Illinoisans here? All right. Folks in the house from Illinois. What, they didn't give you any seats, the people from Illinois? [*Laughter*] What's going on here? But we're going to Galesburg, Illinois. And the reason is, we're going back to Knox College, which is one of the places where I gave my first—it's the place where I gave my first big speech after I had been elected to the U.S. Senate. And this was back in 2005, and I talked at that time about the building blocks that we needed to put into place, the foundation, the cornerstones that we needed to make sure that the American Dream is alive and well.

And I'm going to talk about where we need to go from here, how we need to put behind us the distractions and the phony debates and nonsense that somehow passes for politics these days and get back to basics, refocus on what it is that everybody is talking about around the kitchen table, what people are talking about day to day with their families. And it's going to be the kickoff to what is essentially several months of us trying to get Washington and the press to refocus on the economy and the struggles that middle class families are going to—going through, but also for us to start exploring some big and bold ideas, some of which I've offered in the past, some of which will be new, that allow us to consistently, steadily make progress.

Now, here's the thing: It will be a pretty good speech. [*Laughter*] But as we've learned, I've given some pretty good speeches before—[*laughter*]—and then things still get stuck here in Washington, which is why I'm going to need your help. We had close to 20 million people who were involved in the last campaign. Think about that: close to 20 million people. We had 4 million people actively contribute in $5 or $10 or $25 increments to the campaign. And let's face it, some of those folks, they just wanted to have dinner with George Clooney. I understand that. [*Laughter*] But some of them—most of them, I like to think—[*laughter*]—did so because they believed in the mission and the cause of making sure that we're restoring a sense of what America can be and that we're passing it onto the next generation.

So one of our challenges—and I know what you've been talking about all day—is how do we keep people involved. And naturally, it's not going to be as full of razzmatazz as a campaign. And first of all, we don't have a billion of dollars to spend. [*Laughter*] Second of all, there's just something very clear about a campaign and an election date and voting and targeting.

Nevertheless, in some ways, this stuff is more important. And that's where all of you come in. How are we going to make sure that we're engaging all the people that we touched during the course of the campaign in this central question of creating a building—and building a rising, thriving, active, growing middle class?

And that's why we've been mobilizing people on a whole range of other issues. It's the reason why we're going to need you to continue to stay involved to get immigration reform across the finish line. Because now is the time for us to get comprehensive immigration reform done.

And it's the reason why we're going to need you to stay involved when it comes to climate change and making sure that we are passing on the kind of planet to our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren that is sustainable.

It's why we've continued to have you guys get so active on the Affordable Care Act, because starting on October 1, we are going to be able to sign up people for these marketplaces that are going to give people a square deal when it comes to their health insurance. But we can only do it with you.

So we've got to get folks activated and involved. And ultimately, what you do day to day, away from the TV cameras, that's what is going to make a powerful difference. In the same way that Bill used some of the skills that he learned during the campaign to now organize around wildfires and environmental issues in Colorado, hopefully, all of you have taken away something from your involvement and made it manifest throughout communities all across the country. We need you to keep on doing that. That's the essence of citizenship. If nothing else, that's what the campaign was about.

And I always remind people, I've run my last campaign. Michelle is not sorry about that. [*Laughter*] I've got a little over 1,200 days left in office. I am going to spend every waking minute of every one of those days thinking about and then acting upon any good ideas out there that are going to help ordinary Americans succeed, that are going to make sure that the next generation believes in the American Dream because they've seen it in their own lives. That's how I'm going to spend my time. I hope that's how you're going to spend your time. Because if you do, I guarantee you, we will continue to make progress, and we will deliver on everything that we talked about in 2008 and 2012.

Thank you very much, OFA. I love you guys. Keep it up! Keep it up! Are you still fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental Washington, DC, hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William Townsend, field representative, Organizing for Action; and actor George T. Clooney.

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Dinner
July 22, 2013

Hey! Hello, everybody! Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. We're among friends here; we don't have to be too formal.

Well, first of all, those of you who don't know Jon Carson, Jon didn't get on TV much during the campaign, and Messina was hogging all the attention. [*Laughter*] But there is nobody who is a better grassroots organizer than Jon Carson. And we owe so much to him, and we're so proud of all the work he's doing now. He is outstanding.

I want to thank our outstanding Democratic leader in the House of Representatives—perhaps soon to be Speaker again—Nancy Pelosi in the house. Fighting the good fight. I could not have a better partner than Nancy. And alongside her is my dear friend—and I think he probably had to take off, but I just want to still acknowledge him publicly—Harry Reid is fighting the good fight every single day, and we're so proud of him.

So I'm not going to give a long set of remarks, because I know all of you and mostly I just want to hear from you and have a good conversation for about 45 minutes. This week, I'm going to Galesburg, Illinois. I see an Illinois table here, so a number of you know where Galesburg is. Galesburg is where I gave my first big speech after I had been elected to the United States Senate. It was the commencement at Knox College, and it was a speech about the economy. This was in 2005, so well before the financial crisis. The housing bubble was still going strong; people were still maxing out on their credit cards. On paper at least, it looked like the economy was growing.

But in this speech, what I said was that the world has changed. Technology, globalization, the weakening of unions, all of this had shifted the basic bargain that had existed basically during the post–World War II era. So that for a lot of folks, the idea that if you worked hard, you could make it, you could get a good job that paid a living wage, that you would have the security of decent health care, that you would be able to retire with dignity and respect, that you could count on your kids having a better future than you did—that those things were slipping out of the grasp of a lot of folks.

And in Galesburg, Illinois, Maytag had been a massive employer there, and Maytag had moved out to Mexico. And what had swept through a lot of towns throughout the Midwest and Northeast had happened in Galesburg, where people were left high and dry. Tax base had declined, unemployment had soared, a lot of folks out of work; the jobs that replaced them generally were jobs that paid a much lower wage.

And all these trends that had been taking place were visible at the time—rising inequality, struggles in the middle class—but they were papered over to some extent by the bubble. And by the time I took office, the bottom had fallen out.

Now, the good news is, over the last 5 years, we fought alongside people like Nancy Pelosi. But most importantly, because of the grit and resilience and determination of the American people, we've been able to clear away the rubble and get back to where we were.

The speech I'm going to be giving on Wednesday focuses on the fact that those underlying trends still exist. They are still a central challenge that we face. That there's no more important question for this country than how do we create an economy in which everybody who works hard feels like they can get ahead and feel some measure of security. It isn't to say that other issues are not important. Obviously, if we don't do something about climate change, that has an impact for generations to come. Obviously, if we're not vigilant, we can see a continued erosion in women's rights and civil rights. Obviously, the scourge of gun violence is something that we still have to stay focused on. But what we also know is, is that so many of the issues that we care about are more likely to progress if people feel good about their own lives and their economic situation.

So this is going to be more of a thematic speech, and then we're going to follow it up with a series of more concrete proposals, some of which I've made before, some of which will be new. But the key is to try to make sure that this town refocuses on the issues that matter most to people day to day. Because I think a lot of Americans out there, they're watching—well, they don't watch cable TV, but if they did—or they're listening to the talking heads, they would say to themselves, this doesn't connect with me and what I'm going through and what my children are going through.

And so I'm excited about the speech, not because I think the speech is going to change any minds, but because it gives us an opportunity to refocus attention on the thing that the American people sent me to focus on. And some of the proposals that we've put forward are ones that are going to be very difficult to get through this Congress. Of course, everything is very difficult to get through this Congress. [*Laughter*]

But our goal, I think, is to lay out a vision and a plan and then to just keep on pushing, not just legislatively, but across the board, so that we're changing the nature of the conversation and focusing on what matters. For us to be able to amplify that, we're going to need OFA to get behind it. And for all of you to be here and to be willing to invest your time and energy and money into that effort makes all the difference in the world.

So for that, I'm thankful. And with that, I will take some questions. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:13 p.m. at the Mandarin Oriental Washington, DC, hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jon Carson, executive director, and James A. Messina, national chairman, Organizing for Action.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Men's Basketball Champion University of Louisville Cardinals

July 23, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. And let's give it up for Coach Pitino and the National Champion Louisville Cardinals.

Now, I have to start by recognizing a proud graduate of the University of Louisville, Senator Mitch McConnell, who is here. We've got a number other Members of Congress who are here. We've also got Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer in the house. We've got Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway in the house. And I gather we have a whole bunch of fans everywhere. So—[*laughter*].

Today we're here to celebrate a Louisville team that always played hard, that always worked together, that stayed focused on one singular goal, and that is, to bust my bracket. [*Laughter*] I've been having a tough time lately on my brackets. [*Laughter*] This year I was close; I had the Cardinals in the title game. But I guess I discounted the motivational power of making your 60-year-old coach promise to get a tattoo if you won. [*Laughter*]

Now, we're not going to ask Coach to show it here at the White House—[*laughter*]—but I have to hand it to you, Coach, you did not chicken out. You kept your word. And in return, you've got something that will stay with you forever: a shirtless picture of you on the Internet. [*Laughter*] That will never be erased. [*Laughter*]

But even if the rest of us don't have a tattoo on our shoulder to serve as a reminder, I think we all agree this is a team we will not forget. It had a swarming defense, and as a consequence, the Cardinals were able to capture their school's third national title, but their first since 1986. They ran off 16 straight wins to end the season. They captured the Big East tournament title. They sailed through the first four games of the NCAAs.

In the Final Four, they needed a pair of 3-pointers from walk-on Tim Henderson to mount a late comeback——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. Go ahead and give Tim a big round of applause. [*Laughter*].

Mounting a late comeback against Wichita State to make the title game. And then against Michigan, they treated us to one of the best championship games that any of us has—have seen in a very, very long time. Luke Hancock led the way. At one point——

Audience member. Luke!

The President. Luke! Luke! At one point scoring 14 points in a row, including four-straight 3s, before helping to ice the game with a pair of free throws in the final minutes. And that made Luke one of the first—I believe the first player ever to come off the bench and win the Final Four's most outstanding player. So it's a great testament to him.

This win also made Coach Pitino the first coach in history to win a championship at two different schools. And we won't name the other one, right? [*Laughter*]

Coach Pitino's second title came in the same week that he not only found out that his son been hired as coach at Minnesota, but he had been named to the Basketball Hall of Fame. So he had a pretty good year. And the horse was all right, you know. [*Laughter*] I think I actually lost some money on that horse, so—[*laughter*].

But Coach understands he didn't do any of this alone. As he said, "Players put coaches in the Hall of Fame." And this team had some players. Gorgui Dieng, who is—by the way, I went to Senegal, and everybody was very excited about Mr. Dieng. Played outstanding. Peyton Siva—both Gorgui and Peyton were taken in last month's NBA draft. And so we wish them all the best of luck in their next endeavors.

Luke earned a spot on Team U.S.A. in the World University Games, serving as flag bearer in the opening ceremonies. Russ Smith was a third-team All-America last season. And even though he couldn't be here today, we are all

excited to see what Russdiculous has in store for his senior year. [*Laughter*]

And then, of course, there's Kevin Ware. I told him to say hi to his mom because moms don't like seeing their kids get hurt. And obviously, all of us remember the terrible injury that Kevin suffered. But what we also remember is the love that all of his teammates showed for him, the way that he was on crutches a day later. A week after that, he was up there cutting the nets in Atlanta. Today he's standing here with his teammates, working out, hoping to be ready for fall practice.

And that's the kind of resilience and strong spirit that this team has had. They didn't just show it on the court; they showed it in the classroom and in the community. As a team, Cardinals earned just under a 3.3 GPA, which is outstanding. Three players organized a beard-shaving event that raised more than $7,500 for the American Cancer Society. Peyton spent his Christmas morning delivering toys to kids in a children's hospital. And just before this event, the team met with some of our Nation's wounded warriors, who are here in the audience with us now. And we could not be more proud of them and more grateful to them.

So I want to thank everybody with the Cardinals organization for their outstanding performances, their leadership, and their contributions not just to Louisville, not just to Kentucky, but to the entire country.

Coach, we want to congratulate you again for your amazing leadership. You're a great teacher. Congratulations again on the National Title. And from what I've seen in the preseason polls, we might see you back here at some point. [*Laughter*] So congratulations. Coach Pitino.

Head Coach Richard A. Pitino. Thank you. Well, the first gift that we'd like to give our President is—it's a Louisville Slugger, which is located in Louisville. It says, "National Champions," your name on it. And the reason we picked the bat is, some press conferences are difficult, as it is for me. [*Laughter*] Feel free to use this at any time.

The President. All right. There you go. You hear that, people? [*Laughter*] He's talking to you. I like that. Absolutely.

Coach Pitino. And obviously, the standard jersey.

The President. There you go. Thank you so much, Coach.

Coach Pitino. I guess the greatest thing for us: First time you were running, I would always try to get my guys to participate in politics, and they really had very little interest. They were worried about social activities at school. And I said, you guys, when you get the right to vote, you should vote, even if it's local contests. They said, well, we don't really know a whole lot about politics. I said, you need to study it, whether you're a political science major or not.

When you ran, I said to my team, okay, how many guys are going to vote, trying to get them to—encourage them again. And every person, including managers and coaches, all gave me the time that they would have to miss practice to vote. So you—[*applause*].

The President. That's wonderful. That's a good story. Appreciate it.

Coach Pitino. This team, I think, is the perfect example of what a team is all about. They suffer together. They cry together. Everything that you've heard in Jimmy V.'s speech is represented with this basketball team. They do their best on the court. They do their best off the court. They love each other.

They were so excited to see you today, as—so were the coaching staff. [*Laughter*] And we just really, really are proud of what Louisville represents. We're a blue-collar school. Twenty percent of our students have to have a second job to pay for school. We have 26 Fulbright scholars, more than MIT and Dartmouth and a lot of elite universities—not Harvard—[*laughter*]—but most places like that. So we're real, real proud, because they're overachievers. They go beyond it and have to work real hard. It's everything that our President is trying to build with our country.

So this is a tremendous capping-off of an unbelievable season. We have Kevin Ware now walking. He'll soon be running. We have two of

our players moving on. We have great academic prowess in the classroom. And we've got a chance today to cap off a great season with a visit to the White House and meet a President on our team that's very much well loved. So we're very excited.

One thing is missing—if—for my players. If Michelle was here, they would be off the limits. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Henderson, Peyton Siva, Russ Smith, and Kevin Ware, guards, Luke Hancock, guard-forward, Gorgui Dieng, center, and Stephan Van Treese, forward, University of Louisville men's basketball team; Lisa Junior, mother of Mr. Ware; and Richard Pitino, Jr., head coach, University of Minnesota men's basketball team.

Remarks at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois
July 24, 2013

The President. Hello, Galesburg! Well, it's good to be home in Illinois! It is good to be back. [*Applause*] It's good to be back. Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Well, it is good to be back.

I want to, first of all, thank Knox College. I want to thank Knox College and your president, Teresa Amott, for having me here today. Give Teresa a big round of applause. I want to thank your Congresswoman, Cheri Bustos, who's here. Where's Cheri? There she is. We've got Governor Quinn here. I'm told we've got your Lieutenant Governor, Sheila Simon, is here. There she is. Attorney General Lisa Madigan is here.

I see a bunch of my former colleagues, some folks who I haven't seen in years and I'm looking forward to saying hi to. One in particular I've got to mention, one of my favorites from the Illinois Senate, John Sullivan is in the house. John was one of my earliest supporters when I was running for the U.S. Senate, and it came in really handy because he's got, like, 10 brothers, and his wife's—and sisters, and his wife has got 10 brothers and sisters—[*laughter*]—so they've got this entire precinct just in their family. [*Laughter*] And they all look like John—the brothers do—so he doesn't have to go to every event. He can just send one of his brothers out. [*Laughter*] It is good to see them.

Dick Durbin couldn't make it today, but he sends his best. And we love Dick. He is doing a great job. And we've got one of my favorite neighbors, the Senator from Missouri, Claire McCaskill, in the house, because we're going to Missouri later this afternoon. So—[*applause*].

And all of you are here, and it's great to see you. And I hope everybody is having a wonderful summer. The weather is perfect. Whoever was in charge of that, good job. [*Laughter*]

So, 8 years ago, I came here to deliver the commencement address for the class of 2005. Now, things were a little different back then. For example, I had no gray hair—[*laughter*]—or a motorcade. Didn't even have a prompter. In fact, there was a problem in terms of printing out the speech, because the printer didn't work here, and we had to drive it in from somewhere. [*Laughter*] But it was my first big speech as your newest Senator.

And on the way here, I was telling Cheri and Claire about how important this area was—one of the areas that I spent the most time in outside of Chicago—and how much it represented what's best in America and folks who were willing to work hard and do right by their families. And I came here to talk about what a changing economy was doing to the middle class and what we, as a country, needed to do to give every American a chance to get ahead in the 21st century.

See, I had just spent a year traveling the State and listening to your stories: of proud Maytag workers losing their jobs when the plant moved down to Mexico—a lot of folks here remember that; of teachers whose salaries weren't keeping up with the rising cost of groceries; of young people who had the drive and

the energy, but not the money to afford a college education.

So these were stories of families who had worked hard, believed in the American Dream, but they felt like the odds were increasingly stacked against them. And they were right. Things had changed.

In the period after World War II, a growing middle class was the engine of our prosperity. Whether you owned a company or swept its floors or worked anywhere in between, this country offered you a basic bargain: a sense that your hard work would be rewarded with fair wages and decent benefits, the chance to buy a home, to save for retirement, and most of all, a chance to hand down a better life for your kids.

But over time, that engine began to stall, and a lot of folks here saw it. That bargain began to fray. Technology made some jobs obsolete. Global competition sends a lot of jobs overseas. It became harder for unions to fight for the middle class. Washington doled out bigger tax cuts to the very wealthy and smaller minimum wage increases for the working poor.

And so what happened was that the link between higher productivity and people's wages and salaries was broken. It used to be that, as companies did better, as profits went higher, workers also got a better deal. And that started changing. So the income of the top 1 percent nearly quadrupled from 1979 to 2007, but the typical family's incomes barely budged.

And towards the end of those three decades, a housing bubble, credit cards, a churning financial sector was keeping the economy artificially juiced up, so sometimes, it papered over some of these long-term trends. But by the time I took office in 2009 as your President, we all know the bubble had burst, and it cost millions of Americans their jobs, and their homes, and their savings. And I know a lot of folks in this area were hurt pretty bad. And the decades-long erosion that had been taking place—the erosion of middle class security—was suddenly laid bare for everybody to see.

Now, today, 5 years after the start of that great recession, America has fought its way back. We've fought our way back. So, together, we saved the auto industry, took on a broken health care system. We invested in new American technologies to reverse our addiction to foreign oil. We doubled wind and solar power. Together, we put in place tough new rules on the big banks and protections to crack down on the worst practices of mortgage lenders and credit card companies. We changed a Tax Code too skewed in favor of the wealthiest at the expense of working families, so we changed that, and we locked in tax cuts for 98 percent of Americans, and we asked those at the top to pay a little bit more.

So you add it all up, and over the past 40 months, our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs. This year, we're off to our strongest private sector job growth since 1999.

And because we bet on this country, suddenly, foreign companies are too. Right now more Honda—of Honda's cars are made in America than anyplace else on Earth. Now, Airbus, the European aircraft company, they're building new planes in Alabama. And then American companies like Ford are replacing outsourcing with insourcing; they're bringing jobs back home.

We sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. We produce more natural gas than any country on Earth. We're about to produce more of our own oil than we buy from abroad for the first time in nearly 20 years. The cost of health care is growing at its slowest rate in 50 years. And our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years.

So thanks to the grit and resilience and determination of the American people—of folks like you—we've been able to clear away the rubble from the financial crisis. We've started to lay a new foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. And it's happening in our own personal lives as well, right? A lot of us tightened our belts, shed debt, maybe cut up a couple of credit cards, refocused on those things that really matter.

As a country, we've recovered faster and gone further than most other advanced nations in the world. With new American revolutions in energy and technology and manufacturing

and health care, we're actually poised to reverse the forces that battered the middle class for so long and start building an economy where everyone who works hard can get ahead.

But—and here's the big "but"—I'm here to tell you today that we're not there yet. We all know that. We're not there yet. We've got more work to do. Even though our businesses are creating new jobs and have broken record profits, nearly all the income gains of the past 10 years have continued to flow to the top 1 percent. The average CEO has gotten a raise of nearly 40 percent since 2009. The average American earns less than he or she did in 1999. And companies continue to hold back on hiring those who have been out of work for some time.

Today, more students are earning their degree, but soaring costs saddle them with unsustainable debt. Health care costs are slowing down, but a lot of working families haven't seen any of those savings yet. The stock market rebound helped a lot of families get back much of what they had lost in their 401(k)s, but millions of Americans still have no idea how they're going to be able to retire.

So, in many ways, the trends that I spoke about here in 2005—8 years ago—the trend of a winner-take-all economy where a few are doing better and better and better, while everybody else just treads water, those trends have been made worse by the recession. And that's a problem.

This growing inequality—not just of result, inequality of opportunity—this growing inequality, it's not just morally wrong, it's bad economics. Because when middle class families have less to spend, guess what, businesses have fewer consumers. When wealth concentrates at the very top, it can inflate unstable bubbles that threaten the economy. When the rungs on the ladder of opportunity grow farther and farther apart, it undermines the very essence of America: that idea that if you work hard, you can make it here.

And that's why reversing these trends has to be Washington's highest priority. [*Applause*] It has to be Washington's highest priority. It's certainly my highest priority. Unfortunately, over the past couple of years in particular, Washington hasn't just ignored this problem; too often, Washington has made things worse.

And I have to say that—because I'm looking around the room—I've got some friends here not just who are Democrats; I've got some friends here who are Republicans and who work—I worked with in the State legislature, and they did great work. But right now what we've got in Washington, we've seen a sizable group of Republican lawmakers suggest that they wouldn't vote to pay the very bills that Congress rang up. And that fiasco harmed a fragile recovery in 2011, and we can't afford to repeat that.

Then, rather than reduce our deficits with a scalpel by cutting out programs we don't need, fixing ones that we do need that maybe are in need of reform, making Government more efficient—instead of doing that—we've got folks who've insisted on leaving in place a meat cleaver called the sequester that's cost jobs. It's harmed growth. It's hurt our military. It's gutted investments in education and science and medical research. Almost every credible economist will tell you it's been a huge drag on this recovery. And it means that we're underinvesting in the things that this country needs to make it a magnet for good jobs.

Then, over the last 6 months, this gridlock has gotten worse. I didn't think that was possible. [*Laughter*] The good news is, a growing number of Republican Senators are looking to join their Democratic counterparts in trying to get things done in the Senate. So that's good news. For example, they worked together on an immigration bill that economists say will boost our economy by more than a trillion dollars, strengthen border security, make the system work.

But you've got a faction of Republicans in the House who won't even give that bill a vote. And that same group gutted a farm bill that America's farmers depend on, but also America's most vulnerable children depend on.

Audience member. Boo!

The President. And if you ask some of these folks—some of these folks, mostly in the House—about their economic agenda, how it

is that they'll strengthen the middle class, they'll shift the topic to out-of-control Government spending, despite the fact that we've cut the deficit by nearly half as a share of the economy since I took office.

Or they'll talk about Government assistance for the poor, despite the fact that they've already cut early education for vulnerable kids. They've already cut insurance for people who've lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Or they'll bring up Obamacare—this is tried and true—despite the fact that our businesses have created nearly twice as many jobs in this recovery as businesses had at the same point in the last recovery when there was no Obamacare. So——

Audience member. My daughter has insurance now!

The President. I appreciate that. That's what that's is about. That's what this is about. That's what we've been fighting for.

But with this endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals, Washington has taken its eye off the ball. And I am here to say this needs to stop. This needs to stop.

This moment does not require short-term thinking. It does not require having the same old stale debates. Our focus has to be on the basic economic issues that matter most to you, the people we represent. That's what we have to spend our time on and our energy on and our focus on.

And as Washington prepares to enter another budget debate, the stakes for our middle class and everybody who is fighting to get into the middle class could not be higher. The countries that are passive in the face of a global economy, those countries will lose the competition for good jobs. They will lose the competition for high living standards. That's why America has to make the investments necessary to promote long-term growth and shared prosperity: rebuilding our manufacturing base, educating our workforce, upgrading our transportation systems, upgrading our information networks. That's what we need to be talking about. That's what Washington needs to be focused on.

And that's why, over the next several weeks, in towns across this country, I will be engaging the American people in this debate. I'll lay out my ideas for how we build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America and what it takes to work your way into the middle class in America: job security with good wages and durable industries, a good education, a home to call your own, affordable health care when you get sick, a secure retirement even if you're not rich, reducing poverty, reducing inequality, growing opportunity. That's what we need. [*Applause*] That's what we need. That's what we need right now. That's what we need to be focused on.

Now, some of these ideas I've talked about before. Some of the ideas I offer will be new. Some will require Congress. Some I will pursue on my own. Some ideas will benefit folks right away. Some will take years to fully implement. But the key is to break through the tendency in Washington to just bounce from crisis to crisis. What we need is not a 3-month plan or even a 3-year plan, we need a long-term American strategy, based on steady, persistent effort, to reverse the forces that have conspired against the middle class for decades. That has to be our project.

Now, of course, we'll keep pressing on other key priorities. I want to get this immigration bill done. We still need to work on reducing gun violence. We've got to continue to end the war in Afghanistan, rebalance our fight against Al Qaida. We need to combat climate change. We've got to stand up for civil rights. We've got to stand up for women's rights.

So all those issues are important, and we'll be fighting on every one of those issues. But if we don't have a growing, thriving middle class, then we won't have the resources to solve a lot of these problems. We won't have the resolve, the optimism, the sense of unity that we need to solve many of these other issues.

Now, in this effort, I will look to work with Republicans as well as Democrats wherever I can. And I sincerely believe that there are members of both parties who understand this moment, understand what's at stake, and I will welcome ideas from anybody across the

political spectrum. But I will not allow gridlock or inaction or willful indifference to get in our way.

That means whatever executive authority I have to help the middle class, I'll use it. Where I can't act on my own and Congress isn't cooperating, I'll pick up the phone, I'll call CEOs, I'll call philanthropists, I'll call college presidents, I'll call labor leaders. I'll call anybody who can help and enlist them in our efforts.

Because the choices that we, the people, make right now will determine whether or not every American has a fighting chance in the 21st century. And it will lay the foundation for our children's future, our grandchildren's future, for all Americans.

So let me give you a quick preview of what I'll be fighting for and why. The first cornerstone of a strong, growing middle class has to be, as I said before, an economy that generates more good jobs in durable, growing industries. That's how this area was built. That's how America prospered. Because anybody who was willing to work, they could go out there, and they could find themselves a job, and they could build a life for themselves and their family.

Now, over the past 4 years, for the first time since the 1990s, the number of American manufacturing jobs has actually gone up instead of down. That's the good news. But we can do more. So I'm going to push new initiatives to help more manufacturers bring more jobs back to the United States. We're going to continue to focus on strategies to make sure our Tax Code rewards companies that are not shipping jobs overseas, but creating jobs right here in the United States of America.

We want to make sure that—we're going to create strategies to make sure that good jobs in wind and solar and natural gas that are lowering costs and, at the same time, reducing dangerous carbon pollution happen right here in the United States.

And something that Cheri and I were talking about on the way over here, I'm going to be pushing to open more manufacturing innovation institutes that turn regions left behind by global competition into global centers of cutting-edge jobs. So let's tell the world that America is open for business. I know there's an old site right here in Galesburg, over on Monmouth Boulevard; let's put some folks to work.

Tomorrow I'll also visit the Port of Jacksonville, Florida, to offer new ideas for doing what America has always done best, which is building things. Pat and I were talking before I came—backstage—Pat Quinn; he was talking about how I came over the Don Moffitt Bridge. But we've got work to do all across the country. We've got ports that aren't ready for the new supertankers that are going to begin passing through the new Panama Canal in 2 years' time. If we don't get that done, those tankers are going to go someplace else. We've got more than 100,000 bridges that are old enough to qualify for Medicare. [*Laughter*]

Businesses depend on our transportation systems, on our power grids, on our communications networks. And rebuilding them creates good-paying jobs right now that can't be outsourced.

And by the way, this isn't a Democratic idea. Republicans built a lot of stuff. This is the Land of Lincoln. Lincoln was all about building stuff—first Republican President. And yet, as a share of our economy, we invest less in our infrastructure than we did two decades ago. And that's inefficient at a time when it's as cheap as it's been since the 1950s to build things. It's inexcusable at a time when so many of the workers who build stuff for a living are sitting at home waiting for a call.

The longer we put this off, the more expensive it will be and the less competitive we will be. Businesses of tomorrow will not locate near old roads and outdated ports. They'll relocate to places with high-speed Internet, and high-tech schools, and systems that move air and auto traffic faster and, not to mention, will get parents home quicker from work because we'll be eliminating some of these traffic jams. And we can watch all of that happen in other countries and start falling behind, or we can choose to make it happen right here in the United States.

In an age when jobs know no borders, companies are also going to seek out the countries

that boast the most talented citizens, and they'll reward folks who have the skills and the talents they need; they'll reward those folks with good pay.

The days when the wages for a worker with a high school degree could keep pace with the earnings of somebody who got some sort of higher education, those days are over. Everybody here knows that. There are a whole bunch of folks here whose dads or grandpas worked at a plant, didn't need a high school education. You could just go there. If you were willing to work hard, you might be able to get two jobs. And you could support your family, have a vacation, own your home. But technology and global competition, they're not going away. Those old days aren't coming back.

So we can either throw up our hands and resign ourselves to diminishing living standards, or we can do what America has always done, which is adapt and pull together and fight back and win. That's what we have to do.

And that brings me to the second cornerstone of a strong middle class—and everybody here knows it—an education that prepares our children and our workers for the global competition that they're going to face. And if you think education is expensive, wait until you see how much ignorance costs in the 21st century. [*Laughter*]

If we don't make this investment, we're going to put our kids, our workers, and our country at a competitive disadvantage for decades. So we have to begin in the earliest years. And that's why I'm going to keep pushing to make high-quality preschool available for every 4-year-old in America. Not just because we know it works for our kids, but because it provides a vital support system for working parents.

And I'm going to take action in the education area to spur innovation that don't require Congress. So today, for example, as we speak, Federal agencies are moving on my plan to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet over the next 5 years. We're making that happen right now. We've already begun meeting with business leaders and tech entrepreneurs and innovative educators to identify the best ideas for redesigning our high schools so that they teach the skills required for a high-tech economy.

And we're also going to keep pushing new efforts to train workers for changing jobs. So here in Galesburg, for example, a lot of the workers that were laid off at Maytag chose to enroll in retraining programs like the one at Carl Sandburg College. And while it didn't pay off for everyone, a lot of the folks who were retrained found jobs that suited them even better and paid even more than the ones they had lost.

And that's why I've asked Congress to start a "community college to career" initiative so that workers can earn the skills that high-tech jobs demand without leaving their hometown. And I'm going to challenge CEOs from some of America's best companies to hire more Americans who've got what it takes to fill that job opening, but have been laid off for so long that nobody is giving their résumé an honest look.

Audience member. More talent!

The President. True that. That too.

I'm also going to use the power of my office over the next few months to highlight a topic that's straining the budgets of just about every American family, and that's the soaring cost of higher education. Everybody is touched by this, including your President, who had a whole bunch of loans he had to pay off. [*Laughter*]

Three years ago, I worked with Democrats to reform the student loan system so that taxpayer dollars stopped padding the pockets of big banks and instead helped more kids afford college. Then, I capped loan repayments at 10 percent of monthly incomes for responsible borrowers, so that if somebody graduated and they decided to take a teaching job, for example, that didn't pay a lot of money, they knew that they were never going to have to pay more than 10 percent of their income and they could afford to go into a profession that they loved. That's in place right now. And this week, we're working with both parties to reverse the doubling of student loan rates that happened a few weeks ago because of congressional inaction.

So this is all a good start, but it isn't enough. Families and taxpayers can't just keep paying

more and more and more into an undisciplined system where costs just keep on going up and up and up. We'll never have enough loan money, we'll never have enough grant money, to keep up with costs that are going up 5, 6, 7 percent a year. We've got to get more out of what we pay for.

Now, some colleges are testing new approaches to shorten the path to a degree or blending teaching with online learning to help students master material and earn credits in less time. In some States, they're testing new ways to fund college based not just on how many students enroll, but how many of them graduate, how well did they do.

So this afternoon I'll visit the University of Central Missouri to highlight their efforts to deliver more bang for the buck to their students. And in the coming months, I will lay out an aggressive strategy to shake up the system, tackle rising costs, and improve value for middle class students and their families. It is critical that we make sure that college is affordable for every single American who's willing to work for it.

Now, so you've got a good job; you get a good education—those have always been the key stepping stones into the middle class. But a home of your own has always been the clearest expression of middle class security. For most families, that's your biggest asset. For most families, that's where your life's work has been invested. And that changed during the crisis, when we saw millions of middle class families experience their home values plummeting. The good news is, over the past 4 years, we've helped more responsible homeowners stay in their homes. And today, sales are up, and prices are up, and fewer Americans see their homes underwater.

But we're not done yet. The key now is to encourage homeownership that isn't based on unrealistic bubbles, but instead, is based on a solid foundation, where buyers and lenders play by the same set of rules, rules that are clear and transparent and fair.

So already, I've asked Congress to pass a really good, bipartisan idea—one that was championed, by the way, by Mitt Romney's economic adviser—and this is the idea to give every homeowner the chance to refinance their mortgage while rates are still low so they can save thousands of dollars a year. It will be like a tax cut for families who can refinance.

Now, I'm also acting on my own to cut redtape for responsible families who want to get a mortgage but the bank is saying no. We'll work with both parties to turn the page on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and build a housing finance system that's rock solid for future generations.

So we've got more work to do to strengthen homeownership in this country. But along with homeownership, the fourth cornerstone of what it means to be middle class in this country is a secure retirement. And I hear from too many people across the country, face to face or in letters that they send me, that they feel as if retirement is just receding from their grasp. It's getting farther and farther away. They can't see it.

Now, today, a rising stock market has millions of retirement balances going up, and some of the losses that had taken place during the financial crisis have been recovered. But we still live with an upside-down system where those at the top, folks like me, get generous tax incentives to save, while tens of millions of hard-working Americans who are struggling, they get none of those breaks at all. So as we work to reform our Tax Code, we should find new ways to make it easier for workers to put away money and free middle class families from the fear that they won't be able to retire.

And if Congress is looking for a bipartisan place to get started, I should just say, they don't have to look far. We mentioned immigration reform before. Economists show that immigration reform makes undocumented workers pay their full fare—share of taxes, and that actually shores up the Social Security system for years. So we should get that done.

All right. Good job, good education for your kids, home of your own, secure retirement.

Fifth, I'm going to keep focusing on health care because middle class families and small-business owners deserve the security of knowing that neither an accident or an illness is go-

ing to threaten the dreams that you've worked a lifetime to build.

As we speak, we're well on our way to fully implementing the Affordable Care Act. We're going to implement it. Now, if you're one of the 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, either through the job or Medicare or Medicaid, you don't have to do anything, but you do have new benefits and better protections than you did before. You may not know it, but you do. Free checkups, mammograms, discounted medicines if you're on Medicare—that's what the Affordable Care Act means. You're already getting a better deal. No lifetime limits.

If you don't have health insurance, then starting on October 1, private plans will actually compete for your business, and you'll be able to comparison shop online. There will be a marketplace online, just like you'd buy a flat-screen TV or plane tickets or anything else you're doing online, and you'll be able to buy an insurance package that fits your budget and is right for you.

And if you're one of the up to half of all Americans who've been sick or have a preexisting condition—if you look at this auditorium, about half of you probably have a preexisting condition that insurance companies could use to not give you insurance if you lost your job or lost your insurance—well, this law means that beginning January 1, insurance companies will finally have to cover you and charge you the same rates as everybody else, even if you have a preexisting condition. That's what the Affordable Care Act does. That's what it does.

Now, look, I know—because I've been living it—that there are folks out there who are actively working to make this law fail. I mean—and I don't always understand exactly what their logic is here, why they think giving insurance to folks who don't have it and making folks with insurance a little more secure, why they think that's a bad thing. But despite the politically motivated misinformation campaign, the States that have committed themselves to making this law work are finding that competition and choice are actually pushing costs down.

So just last week, New York announced that premiums for consumers who buy their insurance in these online marketplaces will be at least 50 percent lower than what they're paying today—50 percent lower. So folks' premiums in the individual market will drop by 50 percent. And for them and for the millions of Americans who've been able to cover their sick kids for the first time, like this gentlemen who just said his daughter has got health insurance, or have been able to cover their employees more cheaply or are able to have their kids who are younger than—who are 25 or 26 stay on their parent's plan—for all those folks, you'll have the security of knowing that everything you've worked hard for is no longer one illness away from being wiped out.

Now, finally, as we work to strengthen these cornerstones of middle class security—good job with decent wages and benefits, a good education, home of your own, retirement security, health care security—I'm going to make the case for why we've got to rebuild ladders of opportunity for all those Americans who haven't quite made it yet, who are working hard, but are still suffering poverty wages, who are struggling to get full-time work.

There are a lot of folks who are still struggling out here, too many people in poverty. Here in America, we've never guaranteed success; that's not what we do. More than some other countries, we expect people to be self-reliant. Nobody is going to do something for you. We've tolerated a little more inequality for the sake of a more dynamic, more adaptable economy. That's all for the good. But that idea has always been combined with a commitment to equality of opportunity to upward mobility: the idea that no matter how poor you started, if you're willing to work hard and discipline yourself and defer gratification, you can make it too. That's the American idea.

Unfortunately, opportunities for upward mobility in America have gotten harder to find over the past 30 years. And that's a betrayal of the American idea. And that's why we have to do a lot more to give every American the chance to work their way into the middle class.

Now, the best defense against all of these forces—global competition, economic polarization—is the strength of the community. So we need to—we need a new push to rebuild rundown neighborhoods. We need new partnerships with some of the hardest hit towns in America to get them back on their feet. And because no one who works full-time in America should have to live in poverty, I am going to keep making the case that we need to raise the minimum wage, because it's lower right now than it was when Ronald Reagan took office. It's time for the minimum wage to go up.

We're not a people who allow chance of birth to decide life's biggest winners and losers. And after years in which we've seen how easy it can be for any of us to fall on hard times—folks in Galesburg, folks in the Quad Cities, you know there are good people who work hard, sometimes, they get a bad break: a plant leaves, somebody gets sick, somebody loses a home. We've seen it in our family and in our friends and in our neighbors. We've seen it happen. And that means we cannot turn our backs when bad breaks hit any of our fellow citizens.

So good jobs, a better bargain for the middle class and the folks who are working to get into the middle class, an economy that grows from the middle out, not the top down—that's where I will focus my energies. That's where I will focus my energies not just for the next few months, but for the remainder of my Presidency.

These are the plans that I'll lay out across this country. But I won't be able to do it alone, so I'm going to be calling on all of us to take up this cause. We'll need our businesses, who are some of the best in the world, to pressure Congress to invest in our future. And I'll be asking our businesses to set an example by providing decent wages and salaries to their own employees. And I'm going to highlight the ones that do just that.

There are companies like Costco, which pays good wages and offers good benefits. Companies like—there are companies like the Container Store, that prides itself on training its employees and on employee satisfaction. Because these companies prove that it's not just good for the employees, it's good for their businesses to treat workers well. It's good for America.

So I'm going to be calling on the private sector to step up. I will be saying to Democrats, we've got to question some of our old assumptions. We've got to be willing to redesign or get rid of programs that don't work as well as they should. We've got to be willing to—we've got to embrace changes to cherished priorities so that they work better in this new age. We can't just—Democrats can't just stand pat and just defend whatever Government's doing. If we believe that Government can give the middle class a fair shot in this new century—and I believe that—we've got an obligation to prove it. And that means that we've got to be open to new ways of doing things.

And we'll need Republicans in Congress to set aside short-term politics and work with me to find common ground. Now, it's interesting, in the runup to this speech, a lot of reporters say that, well, Mr. President, these are all good ideas, but some of them you've said before; some of them sound great, but you can't get those through Congress. Republicans won't agree with you. And I say, look, the fact is, there are Republicans in Congress right now who privately agree with me on a lot of the ideas I'll be proposing. I know because they've said so. But they worry they'll face swift political retaliation for cooperating with me.

Now, there are others who will dismiss every idea I've put forward either because they're playing to their most strident supporters or, in some cases, because, sincerely, they have a fundamentally different vision for America: one that says inequality is both inevitable and just; one that says an unfettered free market without any restraints inevitably produces the best outcomes, regardless of the pain and uncertainty imposed on ordinary families and Government is the problem and we should just shrink it as small as we can.

In either case, I say to these Members of Congress: I'm laying out my ideas to give the middle class a better shot, so now it's time for

you to lay out your ideas. You can't just be against something, you got to be for something.

Even if you think I've done everything wrong, the trends I just talked about were happening well before I took office. So it's not enough for you just to oppose me, you got to be for something. What are your ideas? If you're willing to work with me to strengthen American manufacturing and rebuild this country's infrastructure, let's go. If you've got better ideas to bring down the cost of college for working families, let's hear them. If you think you have a better plan for making sure that every American has the security of quality, affordable health care, then stop taking meaningless repeal votes and share your concrete ideas with the country.

Repealing Obamacare and cutting spending is not an economic plan. [*Laughter*] It's not.

If you're serious about a balanced, long-term fiscal plan that replaces the mindless cuts currently in place, or if you're interested in tax reform that closes corporate loopholes and gives working families a better deal, I'm ready to work. But you should know that I will not accept deals that don't meet the basic test of strengthening the prospects of hard-working families. This is the agenda we have to be working on.

We've come a long way since I first took office. As a country, we're older and wiser. I don't know if I'm wiser, but I'm certainly older. [*Laughter*] And as long as Congress doesn't manufacture another crisis—as long as we don't shut down the Government just because I'm for keeping it open—[*laughter*]—as long as we don't risk a U.S. default over paying bills that we've already racked up, something that we've never done—we can probably muddle along without taking bold action. If we stand pat and we don't do any of the things I talked about, our economy will grow, although slower than it should. New businesses will form. The unemployment rate will probably tick down a little bit. Just by virtue of our size and our natural resources and, most of all, because of the talent of our people, America will remain a world power, and the majority of us will figure out how to get by.

But you know, if that's our choice—if we just stand by and do nothing in the face of immense change—understand that part of our character will be lost. Our founding precept about wide-open opportunity, each generation doing better than the last, that will be a myth, not reality. The position of the middle class will erode further. Inequality will continue to increase. Money's power will distort our politics even more.

Social tensions will rise, as various groups fight to hold on to what they have or start blaming somebody else for why their position isn't improving. And the fundamental optimism that's always propelled us forward will give way to cynicism or nostalgia.

And that's not the vision I have for this country. It's not the vision you have for this country. That's not the America we know. That's not the vision we should be settling for. That's not a vision we should be passing on to our children.

I have now run my last campaign. I do not intend to wait until the next campaign or the next President before tackling the issues that matter. I care about one thing and one thing only, and that's how to use every minute—the only thing I care about is how to use every minute of the remaining 1,276 days of my term—[*laughter*]—to make this country work for working Americans again. That's all I care about. I don't have another election.

Because I'll tell you, Galesburg, that's where I believe America needs to go. I believe that's where the American people want to go. And it may seem hard today, but if we're willing to take a few bold steps—if Washington will just shake off its complacency and set aside the kind of slash-and-burn partisanship that we've just seen for way too long—if we just make some commonsense decisions, our economy will be stronger a year from now. It will be stronger 5 years from now. It will be stronger 10 years from now.

If we focus on what matters, then more Americans will know the pride of that first paycheck. More Americans will have the satisfaction of flipping the sign to "Open" on their own business. More Americans will have the joy of

scratching the height of their kid on that door of their brandnew home.

And in the end, isn't that what makes us special? It's not the ability to generate incredible wealth for the few, it's our ability to give everybody a chance to pursue their own true measure of happiness. We haven't just wanted success for ourselves, we want it for our neighbors too.

That's why—[*applause*]—I mean, when we think about our own communities, we're not a mean people, we're not a selfish people, we're not a people that just looks out for number one. Why should our politics reflect those kinds of values? That's why we don't call it John's dream or Susie's dream or Barack's dream or Pat's dream, we call it the American Dream. And that's what makes this country special: the idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try. And that's what we're fighting for.

So yes, Congress is tough right now, but that's not going to stop me. We're going to do everything we can, wherever we can, with or without Congress, to make things happen. We're going to take—go on the road and talk to you, and you'll have ideas, and we want to see which ones we can implement. But we're going to focus on this thing that matters.

One of America's greatest writers, Carl Sandburg, born right here in Galesburg over a century ago—he saw the railroads bring the world to the prairie and then the prairie send out its bounty to the world. And he saw the advent of new industries, new technologies, and he watched populations shift. He saw fortunes made and lost. And he saw how change could be painful, how a new age could unsettle long-held customs and ways of life. But he had that frontier optimism, and so he saw something more on the horizon. And he wrote: "I speak of new cities and new people. The past is a bucket of ashes. Yesterday is a wind gone down, a sun dropped in the west. There is only an ocean of tomorrows, a sky of tomorrows."

Well, America, we've made it through the worst of yesterday's winds. We just have to have the courage to keep moving forward. We've got to set our eyes on the horizon. We will find an ocean of tomorrows. We will find a sky of tomorrows for the American people and for this great country that we love.

So thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. in Memorial Gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Illinois State Attorney General Lisa Madigan; Joan Sullivan, wife of Illinois State Senator John M. Sullivan; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and R. Glenn Hubbard, dean, Columbia University Business School, in his former capacity as chief economic adviser to Mr. Romney.

Remarks at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri
July 24, 2013

Hello, Warrensburg! Hello, Mules! Hello, Jennies! Well, I know it's hot. [*Laughter*] That's why I took off my jacket. If you've still got yours on, feel free to take it off. It is great to be back in Missouri. It's great to be back in the Midwest. It's great to be here at UCM.

I want to thank your outstanding president, Dr. Chuck Ambrose, for having me here today. Give Brian a big round of applause for the introduction. You've got your outstanding Governor, Jay Nixon, in the house. Your mayor, Charlie Rutt, is here. And I brought a special guest with me who is celebrating her birthday today: your Senator, Claire McCaskill. I figured, the least I could do is give her a ride on Air Force One for her birthday. [*Laughter*]

So we've got Mules in the house. We've got Jennies in the house. We've got Governors, we've got Senators, and now we've probably got some very confused people watching at home, because they're—who is Jennie? The—[*laughter*].

I want to thank all the students who came out on a summer afternoon. I know that sum-

mer is—especially a day as pretty as today, it's tempting to be outside. I know classes don't start for a few more weeks. You could be over on Pine Street beating the heat. The—[*applause*]. Now that I think about it, it may be good that you're here instead of getting into trouble. [*Laughter*]

I've just come from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where I gave a pretty long speech on the economy. I will not repeat the whole thing here. But what I did want to talk about today is what I've talked about when I gave my first big speech as a Senator 8 years ago, and that's where we as a country need to go to give every American a chance to get ahead in the 21st century. And UCM understands how important that is.

Just a little context here. In the period after World War II, you had a growing middle class that was the engine of our prosperity. The economy did well in part because everybody was participating. And whether you owned a company or you swept the floors of that company or you worked anywhere in between, America offered a basic bargain: If you work hard, then you'll be rewarded with fair wages and benefits. You'll have the chance to buy your own home. You'll have the chance to save for retirement. You'll have the protection of decent health insurance. But most of all, you'll have the chance to pass on a better life to your kids.

And then what happened was, that engine began to stall. The bargain began to fray. So technology made some jobs obsolete. All right? Nobody goes to a bank teller anymore. You want to schedule a trip somewhere, you get online. Global competition sent some jobs overseas. When I was in Galesburg, we talked about the Maytag plant that used to make household brands there, and people—thousands of people used to work in the plant, and it went down to Mexico. Then Washington doled out bigger tax cuts to folks at the top income brackets, smaller minimum wage increases for people who were struggling. You combine all this, and the income of the top 1 percent quadrupled from 1979 to 2007, but the typical family's incomes barely budged.

So a lot of middle class families began to feel that the odds were stacked against them, and they were right. And then for a while, this was kind of papered over because we had a housing bubble going on, and everybody was maxing out on their credit cards, everybody was highly leveraged, there were a lot of financial deals going around. And so it looked like the economy was going to be doing okay, but then by the time I took office, the bottom had fallen out. And it cost, as we know, millions of Americans their jobs or their homes or their savings. And that long-term erosion of middle class security was evident for everybody to see.

Now, the good news is, 5 years later—5 years after the crisis first hit—America has fought its way back. So together, we saved an auto industry. We took on a broken health care system. We invested in new American technologies to reducereverse our addiction to foreign oil. We doubled the production of clean energy. Natural gas took off. We put in place tough new rules on big banks and mortgage lenders and credit card companies. We changed the Tax Code so it was fair for middle class folks and didn't just benefit folks at the very top like me. No, it's true, because things were skewed too much towards folks who were already blessed, already lucky. And you take all that together, and now you add it all up.

What we've seen is, over the past 40 months, our businesses have created more than 7.2 million new jobs. This year, we're off to our strongest private sector job growth since 1999. All right? Our exports have surged, so we sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. We produce more natural gas than any country on Earth. We're about to produce more of our own oil than we buy from overseas, and that's the first time that's happened in nearly 20 years. The cost of health care is growing at its slowest rate in 50 years, so we're slowing the growth of health care costs. And our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years. Deficits have been cut by almost half from the time I took office.

So we did this together, because Americans are gritty and resilient and work hard. We've been able to clear away the rubble of the

financial crisis. We're starting to lay a new foundation for more durable economic growth. And with the new revolutions in energy and technology and manufacturing and health care, we're actually poised—we're in a position to reverse all those forces that battered middle class families for too long. We can start building now an economy where everybody who works hard can get ahead. That's all good. That's the good news.

But, Missouri, I'm here to tell you what you already know, which is, we're not there yet. In some ways, the trends that have been building for decades—this winner-take-all economy where a few do better and better, but everybody else just treads water—all those trends were made worse by the recession. And reversing these trends has to be Washington's number-one priority. [*Applause*] It has to be Washington's number-one priority.

Putting people back to work, making sure the economy is working for everybody, building the middle class, making sure they're secure—that's my highest priority. That's what I'm interested in. Because when the economy is working for middle class families, it solves an awful lot of other problems. Now the poor start having ladders of opportunity they can climb into if they work hard. A lot of the social tensions are reduced because everybody is feeling pretty good.

Now, unfortunately, over the past couple of years in particular, Washington hasn't just ignored this problem, they've actually made it worse. And I am interested in working with everybody, and there are a bunch of not just Democrats, but also Republicans who recognize that Washington is not working. But we've also seen a group of folks, particularly in the House, a group of Republicans in Congress that—they suggested they wouldn't vote to pay the bills that Congress had already run up. And that fiasco harmed a fragile recovery back in 2011.

We've got a growing number of Republican Senators who are trying to get things done with their Democratic counterparts, just passed an immigration bill that economists say are—is going to boost our economy by more than a trillion dollars. But so far at least, there's a faction of House Republicans who won't let the bill go to the floor for a vote. And if you ask them: "Well, okay, well, what's your economic agenda for the middle class? How are we going to grow our economy so everybody prospers?" They'll start talking about out-of-control Government spending; although, as I said, Government spending has actually gone down and the deficits are going down. Or they'll talk about Obamacare, the whole idea that somehow if we don't provide health insurance to 50 million Americans, that's going to improve the economy. Never mind the fact that our jobs growth is a lot faster now than it was during the last recovery, when Obamacare wasn't around.

So we've got some basic challenges that we're just going to have to meet. We've cut our deficit. We're creating jobs at nearly twice the pace. We are providing health care for Americans that need it. But we now have to get back and focus on what's important. An endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals can't get in the way of what we need to do. And I'm here to say, it's got to stop. We've got to focus on jobs and the economy and helping middle class families get ahead. And if we do that, we're going to solve a whole lot of problems.

And as we're thinking about these issues, we can't get involved in short-term thinking. We can't have all the same old debates. That's not what the moment requires. We've got to focus on the core economic issues that matter to you. And as Washington is now preparing for another debate about the budget, the stakes could not be higher. If we don't make the investments America needs to make this country a magnet for good jobs, if we don't make investments in education and manufacturing and science and research and transportation and information networks, we will be waving the white flag while other countries forge ahead in a global economy. If we just stand by and do nothing, we're saying it's okay for middle class folks to keep taking it on the chin. And I don't think it's okay.

And that's why I came here to Warrensburg today. I need you involved in this debate to re-

mind Washington what's at stake. And over the next several weeks, in towns just like this one, I'm going to lay out my ideas for how we build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class, what it takes to work your way into the middle class: a good job with good wages in durable, growing industries; a good education for our kids and our workers; a home to call your own; affordable health care that's there for you when you or your family members get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; more ladders of opportunity for people who want to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work for it.

And what we need what we need is not a 3-month plan or even a 3-year plan, we need a long-term plan based on steady, persistent effort to reverse the forces that have conspired against middle class families for decades. And I am confident—I know—there are members of both parties who understand what's at stake.

So I welcome ideas from anybody across the political spectrum. But I'm not going to allow gridlock or inaction or willful indifference to get in this country's way. We've got to get moving. So where I can act on my own, I'm going to. I'm not going to wait for Congress. Because the choices that we make now aren't just going to determine what happens to the young people here at this school, it's going to determine what happens to your kids and your grandkids. So one thing I really want to focus on here, because UCM is doing some extraordinary things, I want to focus on just briefly that second cornerstone: an education that prepares our kids and our workers for the global competition that you'll face. That is why I wanted to highlight what's happening here at University of Central Missouri, because you guys are doing some things right.

In an age where business knows no borders, jobs are going to seek out the countries that have the most talented, skilled citizens, and those are the folks who are going to make a good living. The days when the wages for a worker with a high school degree could keep pace with the earnings of somebody with a college degree, those days are over. You can see it all throughout the Midwest, where you've got folks who a generation ago could just walk into a factory or a plant, didn't have a lot of skills, get trained on the job, make a good living, live out a middle class life. That's not going to happen anymore. Technology, global competition, those things are not going away.

So we can either throw up our hands and resign ourselves to lower living standards or we can do what America has always done: We can adapt, we can pull together, we can fight back, we can win. And if we don't invest in American education, then we're going to put our kids, our workers, our countries, our businesses at a competitive disadvantage. Because if you think it's—if you think education is expensive, you should see how much ignorance is going to cost in the 21st century. It's going to be expensive.

So what do we need to do on education? Number one, it's got to start in the earliest years. And that means working with States to make high-quality preschool available for every 4-year-old in America. Every study shows this is a smart investment, encourages healthy behaviors, increases our kids' success in the classroom, increases their earning power as they grow up, reduces rates of teen pregnancy, reduces criminal behavior. It's really important. And any working parent will tell you that knowing your kid is in a safe place to learn is a big relief, so it's also important for the parents.

Now, this idea of early childhood education, it shouldn't be partisan. States with Republican Governors are doing it just like a lot of Democratic Governors are doing it. Our kids don't care about politics. We should prove that we care about them and make this thing happen. And I'm going to keep on pushing, as long as I am President, until we have a situation where every kid is getting a good, healthy start in life and are prepared when they go to school.

We're going to take action on proven ideas to upgrade our schools that don't require Congress. So, for example, last month, I announced a goal of connecting 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet within 5 years. We're working—we're going ahead and taking steps for that to happen right now. Now, some of you may have gone to schools where you had Internet in every

classroom, but a lot of schools right now, they've got a—maybe a computer lab, but if you go in the classroom, kids, they don't have it. In America, in this country, every child at every desk should have access to the entire world's information, and every teacher should have the cutting-edge technology to help their kids succeed and learn. We're going to make that happen.

We've got to rethink our high schools so that our kids graduate with the real-world skills that this new age demands. We've got to reward the schools that forge partnerships with local colleges and businesses and that focus on the fields of the future, like science and technology and math and engineering.

And I'm going to use the power of my office over the next few months to highlight a topic that affects probably everybody here, and that is the soaring cost of higher education. Now, 3 years ago, I worked with Democrats to reform the student loan system so that taxpayer dollars weren't going to pad the pockets of big banks and instead were going to help students get a college education. So millions of students were helped by that. We took action to cap loan repayments at 10 percent of monthly incomes for responsible borrowers. A lot of young people don't know this, but if you've taken out Federal loans, then if you choose a job, let's say, that doesn't pay as much as you'd like or you deserve, if you're a teacher or some other profession, you only have to pay 10 percent of your income, which means that you can afford to go to college and know that you're not going to be broke when you graduate, which is important. And not enough young people are using this.

As we speak—and then, as we speak, we're working with both parties to reverse the doubling of student loan rates that happened a few weeks ago because Congress didn't get its act together. We've got to get student loan rates—interest rates back down.

So these are all good steps, but here's the problem, and this is where what's happening at University of Central Missouri is so important. We can put more and more money into student loans, we can put more and more money into grants, but if college costs keep on going up, then there's never going to be enough money. I can keep student loan rates low, but if you're borrowing $80,000 for college or $100,000 and you get out, it doesn't matter whether interest rate is 3.5 or 8.5, you're still going to have trouble repaying it. It'll take you longer to buy a house. If you've got an idea for a business, it's going to take you longer to invest in starting your business.

So we've got to do something about college costs. Families and taxpayers can't just keep paying more and more into an undisciplined system. We've got to get a better bang for our buck. So States have to do their part by prioritizing higher education in their budgets, right? Because part of the reason tuition's been skyrocketing is colleges aren't—State-funded colleges aren't getting as much funding, and so then tuition is going up on the backs of students and families. But we've also got to test new ways of funding based not just on how many students enroll, but how well they do. And colleges have to do their part by keeping costs from going up.

So here at Central Missouri, you are a laboratory for this kind of innovation. I had a great discussion with not only the president of this university, but also the superintendent of schools here, the head of the community colleges. What's happened at UCM is you've partnered with the Lee's Summit School District, with the Metropolitan Community College, with local health care, engineering, energy, and infrastructure firms—all industries that are going to drive job growth in the future—and everybody is now working together to equip students with better skills, allow them to graduate faster, with less debt, and with the certainty of being able to get a job at the other end. That's a recipe for success over the long term.

So we've got students at Summit Technology Academy—[*applause*]—there we go. Those students, they're beginning to accrue credits towards an associate's degree while they're still in high school, which means they can come here to earn a bachelor's degree in 2 years and graduate debt free. Debt free, on a fast track.

And because the community colleges and industries are involved, students are making quicker decisions about the industries that are going to create jobs, and the businesses are helping to design the programs to make sure that they have the skills for those jobs so that not only are you graduating debt free, but you also know that you've got a job waiting for you on the other end.

Now, that is exactly the kind of innovation we need when it comes to college costs. That's what's happening right here in Warrensburg. And I want the entire country to notice it, and I want other colleges to take a look at what's being done here. And I've asked my team to shake the trees all across the country for some of the best ideas out there for keeping college costs down, so that as students prepare to go back to school, I'm in a position to lay out what's going to be an aggressive strategy to shake up the system, to make sure that middle class students, working class students, poor kids who have the drive and the wherewithal and want to get a good college education, they can get it without basically mortgaging their entire future. We can make this happen, but this is an example of the kind of thing we've got to focus on instead of a bunch of distractions in Washington.

So tackling college costs, creating more good jobs, establishing a better bargain for middle class families and everybody trying to work to join into it, an economy that grows not from the top down, but from the middle out—that's not just what I'm going to focus on for the next few months, that's what I'm going to be focused on for the remainder of my Presidency. And I'm going to take these plans all across the country, and I'm going to ask folks for help because, frankly, sometimes, I just can't wait for Congress. It just takes them a long time to decide on stuff.

So we're going to reach out to CEOs, and we're going to reach out to workers, and we're going to reach out to college presidents, and we're going to reach out to students. We'll talk to Democrats and Independents, and yes, I will be asking Republicans to get involved, because this has to be our core project for the next decade.

I want to lay out my ideas to give the middle class a better shot in the 21st century. And look, I want Republicans to lay out theirs—their ideas. If they've got a better idea to bring down college costs that we haven't thought of, let's hear them. I'm ready to go. If they've got a better plan to make sure that every American knows the security of affordable health care, then please share it with the class. Raise your hand. [*Applause*] You know? But what you can't do is just manufacture another crisis because you think it might be good politics, just as our economy is getting some traction. What you can't do is shut down our Government just because I'm for opening the Government. You can't threaten not to pay the bills this country racked up or to cut investments in education and science and basic research that are going to help us grow.

If we're going to manage deficits and debt, let's do it in a sensible way. We can do this if we work together. And it may seem hard right now, but if we're willing to take a few bold steps—if Washington will just shake off its complacency, set aside the kind of slash-and-burn partisanship that we've seen over the past few years—I promise you, our economy will be stronger a year from now, just like it's stronger now than it was last year. And then it will be stronger 5 years from now, and then it will be stronger 10 years from now. And more Americans will have the pride of a first paycheck. And more Americans will have the satisfaction of starting their own business and flipping that sign that says "Open." More folks will have the thrill of marching across the stage to earn a diploma from a university like this and then know that they've got a job waiting for them when they graduate.

What makes us special—a lot of times we talk about American exceptionalism, and we—how much we love this country, and there are so many wonderful things about our country. But what makes us the envy of the world has not just been our ability to generate incredible wealth for a few people, it's the fact that we've

given everybody a chance to pursue their own true measure of happiness. That's who we are.

We haven't just wanted success for ourselves, we want it for our neighbors. We want it for our neighborhoods. That's why we don't call it Bob's dream or Barbara's dream or Barack's dream, we call it the American Dream. It's one that we share. That's who we are: the idea that no matter who you are, what you look like, where you come from, who you love, you can make it here in America if you're trying hard.

That's what a college education can be all about. That's what inspires your President, that's what inspires the faculty. That's why when we see young people like you, we're inspired, because you're an expression of that idea. And we've got to make sure that that continues, not just for this generation, but for the next generation.

And I've got a hundred—I've got 1,267 days left in my Presidency. And I'm going to spend every minute, every second, as long as I have the privilege of being in this office, making sure that I am doing every single thing that I can so that middle class families, working families, people who are out there struggling every single day, that they know that that work can lead them to a better place. And we're going to make sure that the American Dream is available for everybody, not just now, but in the future.

So thank you, Missouri. Thank you, UCM. Thank you, Mules. Thank you, Jennies. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:09 p.m. in the Student Recreation and Wellness Center. In his remarks, he referred to Brian Greene, student, Systems Engineering Technology program at the Missouri Innovation Campus; David McGehee, superintendent, Lee's Summit School District; and Mark James, chancellor, Metropolitan Community College.

Statement on Senate Passage of Student Loan Legislation
July 24, 2013

A better bargain for the middle class means making a college education available to every single American willing to work for it. That's why I applaud the wide bipartisan majority of Senators who passed a bill to cut rates on nearly all new Federal student loans, rolling back a July 1 rate hike and saving undergraduates an average of more than $1,500 on loans they take out this year.

This compromise is a major victory for our Nation's students. It meets the key principles I laid out from the start: It locks in low rates next year, and it doesn't overcharge students to pay down the deficit. I urge the House to pass this bill so that I can sign it into law right away, and I hope both parties build on this progress by taking even more steps to bring down soaring costs and keep a good education—a cornerstone of what it means to be middle class—within reach for working families.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1911.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Truong Tan Sang of Vietnam
July 25, 2013

President Obama. Well, it is my pleasure to welcome President Truong Tan Sang to the White House and to the Oval Office for his first bilateral meeting with me. This represents the steady progression and strengthening of the relationship between our two countries.

Obviously, we all recognize the extraordinarily complex history between the United States and Vietnam. But step by step, what we have been able to establish is a degree of mutual respect and trust that has allowed us now to announce a comprehensive partnership between our two countries that will allow even

greater cooperation on a whole range of issues, from trade and commerce to military-to-military cooperation, to multilateral work on issues like disaster relief, to scientific and educational exchanges.

What we've also discussed is the ways in which, through the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, both the United States and Vietnam are participating in what will be an extraordinarily ambitious effort to increase trade, commerce, and transparency in terms of commercial relationships throughout the Asia-Pacific region. And we're committed to the ambitious of goal of completing this agreement before the end of the year because we know that this can create jobs and increase investment across the region and in both of our countries.

We discussed the need for continued efforts to resolve peacefully maritime issues that have surfaced in the South China Sea and other parts of the Asia-Pacific region. And we very much appreciate Vietnam's commitment to working with ASEAN and the East Asia Summit in order for us to arrive at codes of conduct that will help to resolve these issues peacefully and fairly.

We discussed the challenges that all of us face when it comes to issues of human rights, and we emphasized how the United States continues to believe that all of us have to respect issues like freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly. And we had a very candid conversation about both the progress that Vietnam is making and the challenges that remain.

We both reaffirmed the efforts that have been made to deal with war legacy issues. We very much appreciate Vietnam's continued cooperation as we try to recover our missing in action and those that were lost during the course of the war. And I reaffirmed the United States commitment to work with Vietnam around some of the environmental and health issues that have continued decades later because of the war.

And finally, we agreed that one of the great sources of strength between our two countries is the Vietnamese American population that is here, but obviously has continued strong ties to Vietnam. And ultimately, it's those people-to-people relations that are the glue that can strengthen the relationship between any two countries.

So I just want to say to President Sang how much I appreciate his visit. I think it signifies the maturing and the next stage of the development between the United States and Vietnam. As we increase consultations, increase cooperation, increase trade and scientific and education exchanges, ultimately, that's going to be good for the prosperity and opportunities of the people here in the United States, as well as good for the opportunities and prosperity of the people of Vietnam.

At the conclusion of the meeting, President Sang shared with me a copy of a letter sent by Ho Chi Minh to Harry Truman. And we discussed the fact that Ho Chi Minh was actually inspired by the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution and the words of Thomas Jefferson. Ho Chi Minh talks about his interest in cooperation with the United States. And President Sang indicated that, even if it's 67 years later, it's good that we're still making progress.

Thank you very much for your visit. And I look forward to continued work together. Thank you so much.

[*At this point, President Sang spoke in Vietnamese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Sang. President Obama, ladies and gentlemen, once again, I would like to thank you, President Obama, for your kind invitation extended to me to visit the United States, as well as the warm hospitality that you have extended to me over the past couple of days while I'm here in the U.S.

To be frank, President Obama and I had a very candid, open, useful, and constructive discussion. Given the progress of our bilateral relationship over the past 18 years, it is time now to form a comprehensive partnership in order to further strengthen our relations in various areas.

We discussed various matters, including political relations, science and technology,

education, defense, the war—the legacy of the war issue, environment, the American—the Vietnamese American community, human rights as well. And the East Sea as well, I'm sorry.

In this—in a candid, open, and productive—constructive spirit, we have come to agree on many issues. We will strengthen high-level exchanges between the two countries. We will consider in order to continue our—to upgrade the mechanism of cooperation at the high level, as well as take the best use of the existing mechanism of cooperation. Particularly, we will continue regular dialogue at the highest level as possible. I believe that this is a way in order to build a political trust for further development of our cooperation in all areas.

Economic and trade relations continue to be important to our relations. As far as TPP is concerned, the Vietnamese side will do its utmost in order to participate in the process of negotiations for the conclusion of TPP by the end of this year.

We also discussed in detail our cooperation in science and technology, in education and training, as well as security and defense. We also touched upon the war legacy issues, including human rights, which we still remain—which we still have differences on the issue.

We also—I also expressed my appreciation for the care that the U.S. has extended to the Vietnamese who came to settle in the United States, and now they have become American citizens and contributing to the overall development of the U.S. And thanks to the support and assistance from the U.S. Government, as well as the American people, the Vietnamese community—the Vietnamese American community here in the U.S. has become more and more prosperous and successful in their life as well as work—at work.

And I also would like to take this opportunity to express a message from—to convey a message from our Government to the Vietnamese American community here in the U.S. that we would like to see you contributing more and more to the friendship between our two countries as well as further development of our relationship in the future.

We also talked—discussed in detail the issue of the East Sea. We appreciate and will welcome the U.S. support for our stance in this matter, as well as the stance of ASEAN relating to this particular matter, and we appreciate the U.S. support to solving the matter by peaceful means in accordance with international law, DOC, and moving toward to COC. We welcome the United States support, as well as other countries' support, in the matter in order to ensure the peace, stability, prosperity, not only in the East Sea, but also in the Asia-Pacific and the world at large.

Last but not least, I also, on behalf of our Government and our state, to extend to President Obama our invitation to visit Vietnam. And President Obama has accepted invitation and will try his best to pay a visit, at least by the end—before the end of his term.

[*As President Sang continued his remarks in Vietnamese, the interpreter spoke as follows.*]

Interpreter. Actually, I would like to correct my translation a little bit: And President Obama has accepted our invitation and will try his best to pay a visit to Vietnam during this term—during his term.

[*The interpreter then translated President Sang's concluding remarks as follows.*]

President Sang. And once again, I would like to thank President Obama and all of the American people for their warm hospitality extended to me during this trip to the United States. And I believe that our cooperation will continue to strengthen for the mutual interest and benefit of our people.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, President Sang referred to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea (DOC) and the Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC).

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang of Vietnam

July 25, 2013

President Barack Obama welcomed President Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the White House on July 25, 2013. During their meeting, the two Presidents affirmed their commitment to opening a new phase of bilateral relations between Vietnam and the United States based on mutual respect and common interests. President Truong Tan Sang's visit comes at an important time for both nations, reflecting a shared desire to build a forward-looking relationship between the two countries.

President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang decided to form a U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership to provide an overarching framework for advancing the relationship. They underlined the principles of the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership, including respect for the United Nations Charter, international law, and each other's political systems, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. They stated that the Comprehensive Partnership is intended to contribute to peace, stability, cooperation, and prosperity in each country, in the region, and in the world. The new Comprehensive Partnership will create mechanisms for cooperation in areas including political and diplomatic relations, trade and economic ties, science and technology, education and training, environment and health, war legacy issues, defense and security, protection and promotion of human rights, and culture, sports, and tourism.

Political and Diplomatic Cooperation

As part of the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership, the two sides agreed to increase high level exchanges as well as contacts at all levels, and to intensify dialogue and cooperation mechanisms. President Obama affirmed the United States' support for Vietnam's independence, sovereignty, prosperity, and integration into the international community. President Truong Tan Sang welcomed the United States' enhanced cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, which contributes to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region.

The Presidents welcomed the establishment of a regular dialogue between their two foreign ministers, and encouraged dialogues and exchanges between entities associated with political parties in both countries.

President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang agreed to enhance cooperation at regional and international forums including The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting Plus (ADMM+) to support peace, stability, cooperation, and development in the Asia-Pacific region. The two Leaders reaffirmed their support for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law, including as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Presidents also reaffirmed their support for the principle of non-use of force or threat-of-force in resolving territorial and maritime disputes. The Presidents underscored the value of full observance of the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the importance of launching negotiations to conclude an effective Code of Conduct (COC).

President Truong Tan Sang expressed his appreciation for the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI). The two Presidents agreed that the two sides would work together with other member countries and the Friends of the Lower Mekong to further strengthen regional cooperation to promote prosperity and sustainable development, narrow the development gap, enhance connectivity, and respond to transnational challenges in the region.

The two Presidents instructed relevant agencies to conclude as soon as possible a bilateral agreement on the construction of new embassies and missions. The Leaders affirmed

that the United States' and Vietnam's diplomatic presence in their respective capitals should reflect the development of their bilateral ties.

Trade and Economic Ties

Recalling their discussions in Cambodia in November 2012, President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang reaffirmed their commitment to conclude a comprehensive, high-standard Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement as soon as possible this year. A 21st-century TPP agreement will advance regional economic integration, further development objectives, and lead to the creation of jobs in the United States, Vietnam, and all TPP countries, while taking into account the diversity of the participants' levels of development in the context of a comprehensive and balanced package.

The Presidents welcomed continued efforts to further bilateral economic, commercial, and investment ties, and President Obama noted Vietnam's reform efforts as a developing economy. They underlined the critical value of these efforts to advancing the bilateral relationship, and the importance of economic cooperation as a foundation and engine for the new U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership. The Presidents agreed to enhance cooperation under the U.S.-Vietnam Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council as well as under the ASEAN Enhanced Economic Engagement initiative and in APEC to increase economic and trade engagement in line with the bilateral Comprehensive Partnership and shared objectives in the World Trade Organization (WTO), APEC, and ASEAN fora. President Obama applauded Vietnam's progress in economic reform President Obama noted Vietnam's interest in pursuing market economy country status and is committed to intensifying the United States' constructive engagement with Vietnam on its economic reforms. The Presidents acknowledged Vietnam's intention to accede to the Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment (CTC).

Both Presidents noted the importance of growing commercial ties between the two economies, and made special mention of: the MOU signed between PetroVietnam and U.S. Export-Import Bank to support trade and investment in the petroleum and energy sectors in Vietnam; the Framework Heads Agreement on the Ca Voi Xanh offshore Vietnam development project between Exxon Mobil Corporation and PetroVietnam; the Cooperation Agreement between Murphy Oil Corporation and PetroVietnam Exploration Production Corporation (PVEP); an MOU between Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife) and Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam (BIDV); and the Vietnam Ministry of Finance's approval in principle for establishment of a fund management company by ACE Insurance. The Presidents welcomed U.S. Department of Agriculture support for capacity building and training programs designed to help Vietnam adopt and apply sound science and technology to the benefit of Vietnamese farmers, agricultural companies, and consumers. The two leaders recognized the importance of protecting the most vulnerable populations while pursuing economic development, including working together to combat child and forced labor.

Science and Technology Cooperation

President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang discussed the importance of scientific and technological cooperation. They welcomed the 8th meeting of the Joint Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation to be held this autumn, and highlighted efforts to build ties between the scientific communities in the United States and Vietnam to strengthen bilateral relations, respond to climate change and other global challenges, and foster innovation-driven economic growth. President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang reiterated their intention to continue scientific cooperation, including in the areas of civil nuclear energy, space technology, and maritime research. The Presidents highlighted the successful conclusion of a joint effort to remove all highly enriched uranium from Vietnam. The two leaders agreed to continue cooperation to support Vietnam's aspirations for a peaceful nuclear

energy program with the highest standards of safety, safeguards, and security.

Education Cooperation

The Presidents agreed on the need to enhance educational, cultural, and people-to-people ties between the United States and Vietnam. They remarked on the rapid growth of Vietnamese students studying at U.S. universities and colleges, and expressed hope that more U.S. students will pursue study abroad opportunities in Vietnam. They agreed that close cooperation on education and training are critical elements to the next phase of the relationship. They also noted that robust English language instruction will help Vietnam compete in the 21st century global economy. President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang noted the success of bilateral education and exchange initiatives, especially the Fulbright program and the Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP). The two Presidents noted the success of the Fulbright Economics Teaching Program and President Truong Tan Sang welcomed the initiative establishing a Fulbright University in Vietnam.

Environment and Health

President Obama and President Truong Tan Sang welcomed increasing bilateral cooperation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Vietnam through promotion of clean energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable forestry, and to strengthen Vietnam's resilience to climate change, rising sea level and natural disasters, including through the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Clean Energy Program and Forests and Deltas Program. President Obama reaffirmed the United States' commitment to providing further medical and other care and assistance for persons with disabilities, regardless of cause.

The two leaders also agreed to work together, along with their LMI partners, to promote scientific research, capacity-building, and dialogue to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of the Mekong Delta and the Lower Mekong River Basin. President Obama expressed appreciation for Vietnam's leadership as the co-chair of the LMI Environment and Water Pillar, which has included two joint research proposals from Vietnam on water resources management in the basin. The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the recent conclusion of the Agreement on Healthcare and Medical Sciences Cooperation and looked forward to enhanced public health cooperation to promote global health security. President Truong Tan Sang expressed his appreciation for the U.S. government's continued support through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) for Vietnam's efforts to build sustainable systems for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care.

War Legacy Issues

The two Presidents agreed that extensive cooperation in addressing war legacy issues to deepen mutual trust has allowed both countries to develop a relationship that looks to the future. President Obama expressed his appreciation for Vietnam's continued cooperation in providing for the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel missing in action (MIA). President Obama reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to assist Vietnam in its MIA accounting efforts. President Truong Tan Sang noted the U.S. Government's contributions to Vietnam's efforts to clean up unexploded ordnance (UXO), assist those injured by UXO, and prevent future casualties. The Presidents expressed satisfaction with progress on USAID and the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defense's project to clean up dioxin contamination at Danang International Airport. President Truong Tan Sang welcomed plans by the U.S. Government to conduct an environmental assessment of dioxin contamination at Bien Hoa Air Base.

Defense and Security

The two leaders agreed that the United States and Vietnam would continue to cooperate on defense and security. They expressed satisfaction with the Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Bilateral Defense

Cooperation of 2011 and reaffirmed their commitment to its full implementation. The Presidents agreed to continue the U.S.-Vietnam Defense Policy Dialogue and the bilateral Political, Security, and Defense dialogue as opportunities to review the defense and security relationship and discuss future cooperation. The two Presidents agreed to expand mutually beneficial cooperation to enhance capabilities such as search and rescue and disaster response. The Presidents also underscored the importance of enhanced cooperation in nontraditional security matters and agreed to work more closely to counter terrorism; enhance maritime law enforcement cooperation; combat transnational crime including piracy, and narcotics, human, and wildlife trafficking; and address high-tech crime and cyber security. President Obama welcomed Vietnam's decision to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations and emphasized the United States' desire to assist with training and other support for this effort through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI).

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

The Presidents took note of the benefits of a candid and open dialogue to enhance mutual understanding and narrow differences on human rights. They emphasized the importance of protection and promotion of human rights. President Truong Tan Sang informed President Obama of Vietnam's efforts and achievements in promoting human rights and rule of law and in protecting the rights of religious believers. President Truong Tan Sang also affirmed that Vietnam was prepared to sign the United Nations Convention Against Torture by the end of the year and stated that Vietnam would invite the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2014. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to uphold the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Culture, Tourism and Sports

President Truong Tan Sang and President Obama highlighted the importance of enhanced cooperation on culture, sports and tourism to strengthening people-to-people exchange and mutual understanding. They took note of the success of the Vietnamese-American community in the United States and their important contributions to the growth of bilateral ties. The two Presidents encouraged more people-to-people exchange through art performances, concerts, exhibitions and other cultural and sports events between the two countries.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at JAXPORT in Jacksonville, Florida
July 25, 2013

The President. Hello, Jacksonville! Well, it is good to be in Jacksonville. Good to be back. How you all doing today?

Audience members. Good!

The President. You look good.

Audience member. Thank you!

Audience member. You look good too!

The President. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Jacksonville Port Authority Chairman Joe York. Give him a big round of applause. I want to thank the CEO of MOL America, Tsuyoshi Yoshida. I want to thank everybody here at JAXPORT for having me here today. I brought along our new Secretary of Transportation, Anthony Foxx. He is here. We've got wonderful Congresswoman Corrine Brown here. Yay, Corrine! Mayor Alvin Brown is also in the house.

And I would like to recognize the folks from the port and TraPac for showing me the cranes you've got back at the terminal. Those are some big cranes. [*Laughter*] This is some serious business here. And just watching what was going on down here and knowing what's possible is a reminder of all the potential that we've got in this country: to put folks to work, to re-

build America, to make sure that everybody has got a fair shot.

Well, yesterday, in Illinois, I talked about what we need to do as a country to build a better bargain for the middle class and everybody who's trying to get into middle class, a strategy that we've got to pursue, together, to make sure that everybody who works hard has a chance to get ahead in this 21st-century economy. Because, for decades, a growing middle class was the engine of our prosperity; it's what made us great. If you worked hard, you knew your work was going to be rewarded with fair wages, good benefits, the chance to buy a home, save for retirement, and most of all, the chance to pass down a better life to your kids. That's the American Dream.

But eventually, that engine of prosperity began to stall. You had technology that made some jobs obsolete. You had globalization, which meant some jobs got shipped overseas. Unions got weaker, in part because some of the laws that we passed. And so for most of the last decade, people were working harder and harder just to get by. And then you have a devastating recession because of what happened in the financial markets, and that cost millions of Americans their jobs and their homes and their savings. And what it did was lay bare for everybody to see the steady erosion of middle class security that had been happening for almost a generation.

Now, the good news is that after nearly 5 years since that financial crisis happened, thanks to the hard work and the resilience of the American people, America has fought back. So together, we saved an auto industry. And I was told that the terminal I was at is one of the places where we're sending out more American cars than ever before, all around the world.

We took on a broken health care system. We invested in new American technologies to reverse our addiction to foreign oil. We doubled our production of clean energy. We put in place tough new rules on the big banks and the mortgage lenders and credit card companies to make sure that we didn't have the same kinds of financial shenanigans that we had seen before. We changed a Tax Code that was too skewed in favor of the wealthy, made sure it was doing more for middle class and working class families. We locked in tax cuts for 98 percent of Americans, and then we asked folks at the top to pay a little bit more.

So you add all this up, and over the last 40 months, our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs—7.2. And this year, we're off to our strongest private sector job growth since 1999—strongest job growth in over a decade.

So today, we sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. Our exports have surged. We produce more natural gas than any country on Earth. We're about to produce more of our own oil than we buy from overseas. That's the first time that's happened in nearly 20 years. The cost of health care is growing at its slowest rate in 50 years. And our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years. So you've got health care costs starting to slow down, deficits plummeting, jobs up, exports up, energy production up.

We've cleared away the rubble from the financial crisis, thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, and we've begun to lay a new foundation for stronger, more durable, more sustainable economic growth. And with the revolutions that are coming in energy and technology and manufacturing and health care, we're poised to be able to finally reverse some of those forces that were hurting middle class families for so long. We can start rebuilding an economy where everybody who works hard can get ahead. That's our goal.

But I'm here to tell you today what you already know: We're not there yet. In a lot of ways, those trends that have been building for decades, this winner-take-all economy where a few folks are doing better and better and better at the top and everybody else is just treading water, those trends have been made worse by the recession. And reversing those trends should be Washington's highest priority. It's my highest priority.

Unfortunately, over the past couple of years in particular, Washington hasn't just ignored the problem; a lot of times, it's made things

worse. And sometimes, when you're on the outside, you look, and it just sounds like a bunch of noise, and you don't know what's going on between Democrats and Republicans. And my attitude is, is that we're all Americans first and no party has a monopoly on good ideas. And I think there are a number of Republicans out there who mean well, although they're not always willing to say so, because they might get in trouble. [*Laughter*]

But right now we've seen a group of Republicans in the House, in particular, who suggest they wouldn't vote to pay the very bills that Congress has already racked up. That harmed our recovery back in 2011. It would severely harm it again. It could plunge us back into financial crisis.

Over the last 6 months, the gridlock's gotten worse. There are a number of Republican Senators who are trying to get things done. They passed a strong immigration bill that economists say will boost our economy by more than a trillion dollars. But so far, we haven't been able to get the House Republicans to give it a vote.

And if you ask some of these same folks about how they'd strengthen the middle class, they'll tell you, well, out-of-control Government spending is the problem, despite the fact that as a share of the economy we have cut the deficit by nearly half since I took office. Or they'll say Obamacare is the problem; the problem is that we're trying to give health insurance to millions of Americans who don't have it. Now, I've got to tell you, our businesses have created jobs at nearly twice the pace of the last recovery, when there was no Obamacare, so it's kind of hard to figure how Obamacare is actually the problem, giving people health insurance. And by the way, tens of millions of Americans now have new benefits like free checkups and cheaper medicine on Medicare. So they don't think that's a problem.

The point is, with an endless distraction of political posturing and phony scandals and Lord knows what, Washington keeps taking its eye off the ball. And that needs to stop. We've got to stop with the short-term thinking. We've got to stop with the outdated debates. That's not what the moment requires: a focus on the core economic issues that matter to you, that matter to middle class Americans, all those who are trying to get in the middle class. That's what this moment requires. We've got to stay focused on how do we build an economy that works everybody. That's my focus.

And as Washington prepares to enter another budget battle, another budget debate, the stakes could not be higher. At a time when we need to make investments to create jobs and strengthen the middle class and grow our economy—because we've got competition coming from all around the world—we've got some of the House Republicans who put forward a budget that does just the opposite. They're pushing bills that would cut education, cut science, cut research, prevent us from meeting these priorities.

We should be doubling down on American clean energy technology; they're creating jobs, lowering dangerous carbon pollution. But they want to protect taxpayer giveaways to big oil companies. Let other countries win the race for the jobs of the future. That doesn't make sense.

Instead of helping hard-working students afford the college degree that the jobs of tomorrow increasingly demand, they want to slash funding for the very grants that help students make their tuition payments. Instead of giving more families the security of decent health care, they want to let insurance companies reinstate lifetime dollar limits and drop millions of people from their plans.

And if we don't make the necessary investments to ensure that America is a magnet for good jobs—investments in education, manufacturing, research, and transportation and information networks—we're just waving the white flag of surrender to other countries as they forge ahead in this global economy. That kind of attitude is saying there's nothing we can do to help middle class families compete and win and grow. And that's a bad bargain for the middle class.

So that's why I came down to Jacksonville today. I want you involved in this debate and remind Washington what's at stake. And over

the next several weeks, in cities and towns just like this one, I'm going to lay out my ideas for how we build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America, what it takes to work your way into the middle class in America, and what we can do to help families, not help special interests, but help families. That's what we need.

And by the way, Jacksonville, what we need isn't a 3-month plan or even a 3-year plan, we've got to have a long-term plan based on steady, persistent effort to reverse the forces that are conspiring against middle class families. That's what I'm pushing for. And like I said, I think that there are Democrats and Republicans who understand what's at stake, and I'm going to welcome ideas from anybody across the political spectrum. But I'm not going to let gridlock or inaction or indifference to the plight of families get in the way of this country.

So where I can act on my own, I'm going to act on my own. I won't wait for Congress. Because the choices we make right now will determine whether or not every American will have a fighting chance in the 21st century.

So we know what those cornerstones of real middle class security are: a good job with good wages; a good education; a home you can call your own; affordable health care that's there for you when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; more chances for folks to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work hard for it.

But I'm here today to specifically talk about the cornerstone, the essence of middle class security, and that's a good job in growth industries. We've got to help more manufacturers bring more jobs back to America. We've got to keep creating good jobs in manufacturing. We've got to create good jobs in wind and solar energy. We've got to tap into this natural gas revolution that's bringing energy costs down in this country, which means manufacturers now want to locate here because they're thinking that we've got durable, reliable supplies of energy. We've got to create more jobs today doing what you're doing right here at JAXPORT, and that's building this country's future.

We need modern schools for our kids. We need modern power grids and fuel networks that can withstand stronger storms. And we need modern ports so we can move more goods made in America out to the rest of the world.

If you want to create jobs right now, but also jobs that will have impacts for years, here's the way to do it. We know strong infrastructure is a key ingredient to a thriving economy. That's how the United States became the best place in the world to do business. Unfortunately, over the past 2 years, too many folks in Washington have been cutting these investments. The world can't wait for Congress to get its act together.

So let me give you an example; many of you are familiar with this. In a couple of years, new supertankers are going to start coming through the Panama Canal. Those supertankers can hold three times the amount of cargo. We want those supertankers coming here to Jacksonville. Right? If we've got more supertankers coming here, that means more jobs at the terminals. That means more warehouses in the surrounding area. That means more contractors are getting jobs setting up those warehouses. That means they've got more money to spend at the restaurant. That means the waitress has more money to spend to buy her iPod. It starts working for everybody.

If we want our workers and businesses to compete, then our ports have to be ready to receive those supertankers. Otherwise, they'll go to Brazil or some other place.

Audience member. You tell them, Mr. President!

The President. So that's why last year I acted without Congress, and I took executive action to speed up the permitting process that gets workers breaking ground on projects like this one. And then private companies came onboard here at JAXPORT. They saw it as a good investment. And we're building the same kind of partnerships across the country, especially by the way, in some of these Gulf ports: Charleston, Savannah. And now these ports are on track to be better prepared for those

supertankers and their cargo loads ahead of schedule.

But we've now got to keep at it. The businesses of tomorrow will not locate near old roads, outdated ports; they're going to go to places where the ports are good, the roads are good, the rail lines are good, you've got high-speed Internet, you've got high-tech schools, trained workers, systems that move air traffic and auto traffic faster.

Think about it in terms of your own house, right? The—if you've got a leaky roof and you haven't done the tuck-pointing and the boiler is getting kind of old and rickety, you can say to yourself, well, I'm going to save money by not fixing my roof. And I'm going to save money by not getting a new boiler. And I'm not going to worry about that tuck-pointing. And then, 2 years later, 5 years down the road, what happens? House starts breaking down. You end up spending more money.

We can't defer things that we know we're going to have to do and, by the way, would put people to work right now doing them. But that's what we're doing right now. As a share of our economy, we're investing less in rebuilding America than we did two decades ago. We're spending less on fixing our infrastructure than China is, than Germany is. All our competitors, they know we've got to start taking care of this stuff. We're lagging behind.

And the irony is, right now it's cheaper to build than it's been since the 1950s. You've got a whole bunch of construction workers who are looking for work right now. You've got a whole bunch of contractors who will come in under—with low bids, and they'll come in on time.

So now is the time for us to do it. The longer we put this off, the more expensive it will be, the less competitive we'll be. So why aren't we doing it? Now, part of it's just politics right now. But making sure we've got world-class infrastructure, that shouldn't be a partisan issue. That's an American issue. It's not a Republican or a Democratic issue.

But this year's budget cuts have delayed two important rapid transit projects right here in Jacksonville that would carry more people into downtown, alleviate congestion at the same time, and put more Floridians back to work.

We can do better than that. There's a bipartisan bill in the Senate to fund critical improvements in our highways and our bridges, our transit and rail systems, and our ports like this one. And so the House should act quickly on that bill. Let's get more Americans back on the job doing the work America needs done. That will be good for middle class families. That will be good for middle class security. That will be good for homeownership. That will be good for education. That is the smart thing to do. Let's get past politics and do it.

I tell my Republican friends, this is not a partisan issue. The first Republican President is a guy from my home State. He was a pretty good President, named Abraham Lincoln. [*Laughter*] He had a whole lot of things to worry about, had a Civil War, probably the biggest crisis that this country ever experienced. And yet, in the middle of that, he was still thinking about how do we build that transcontinental railroad? How are we going to widen our canals and our ports so that we can move products all around the country and eventually the world? How do we invest in land-grant colleges so that our workers are now skilled and can get those new jobs? We're going to invest in the National Science Foundation to make sure that we stay ahead of everybody else when it comes to technology.

He made those investments, the first Republican President. He didn't say, well, that's not the job of government to help do that. He wouldn't have understood that kind of philosophy, because he understood there are some things we can only do together. And rebuilding our infrastructure is one of them.

Creating more good jobs, a better bargain for the middle class, helping folks who are working to join the middle class, an economy that grows from the middle out—this isn't what I'm going to be focusing on for the next few months, this is what I'm going to be focusing on for all the days I've got left in my Presidency. I've counted them, there are 1,266 days left—1,266 days left.

So, over the next several weeks, we're going to roll out these plans. We're going to take them across the country. We're going to ask not just Congress to do something, we're going to ask everybody for their help: CEOs, workers, college presidents, students, Democrats, Independents, and yes, Republicans.

I'm laying out my ideas to give the middle class a better shot. And if the Republicans don't agree with me, I want them to lay out their ideas. If they've got a better plan to create jobs to rebuild our infrastructure and make sure that we've got great ports all along the Gulf, come on, let me know what your ideas are. I'm listening.

If they've got better ideas to make sure every American knows the security of affordable health care, well, share it with the country. Repealing Obamacare and slashing our budgets in education and research and infrastructure, that's not an economic plan. There's no economist who would look at that and say, well, that's the way we're going to help middle class families; we're really going to grow doing that.

Shutting down the Government just because I'm for keeping it open, that's not an economic plan. Threatening that you won't pay the bills in this country when we've already racked up those bills, that's not an economic plan. That's just being a deadbeat. [*Laughter*]

So put out some plans. I don't claim to have a monopoly on every good idea. [*Laughter*] I don't. And I'm happy to steal good ideas from anybody, because I just want to make things work. And it may seem hard sometimes, but if we're willing to take a few bold steps, if Washington will just shake off its complacency and set aside just this kind of constant gridlock and "my way or the highway" attitude, then our economy will be better a year from now, just like it's better now than it was last year. And it will be better 5 years from now. And it will be better 10 years from now.

And I'm going to spend every single minute of every day, as long as I have the privilege of this office, making sure that I'm doing everything in my power to make this economy work for working Americans again: to build a better middle class and to make sure the American Dream is something that's alive and real and achievable for decades to come.

That's what I'm fighting for, Florida. That's what I need you for, Florida. Let's make it happen. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. at the Ed Austin Marine Terminal on Dames Point.

Statement on the Train Accident in Santiago de Compostela, Spain
July 25, 2013

Michelle and I were shocked and saddened by the news of yesterday's tragic train derailment in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. On behalf of the American people, we offer our deepest sympathies and condolences to the families and loved ones of the more than 80 people who lost their lives. We extend our wishes for a full recovery to those who were hurt. We also offer our heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Spain and to the rescue personnel who are working to locate the missing and treat the injured, including at least six Americans. Today the American people grieve with our Spanish friends, who are in our thoughts and prayers. We stand ready to provide any assistance we can in the difficult days ahead.

NOTE: The statement referred to Arlington, VA, residents Ana Maria, Philippe, and Christina Cordoba; Houston, TX, residents Robert and Myrta Fariza; and Bountiful, UT, resident Stephen Ward.

Remarks at the Iftar Dinner
July 25, 2013

Thank you. Good evening, everybody. Please have a seat.

Let me begin by saying welcome to all of you. I'm so glad that all of you were able to attend. I want to acknowledge members of the diplomatic corps; we have Members of Congress here, including Keith Ellison and Andre Carson. Where's Andre? He's usually not hard to miss. [*Laughter*] There you go. Leaders from my administration and guests from all across our Nation, and to all of you and to Muslim Americans all across the country and around the world: *Ramadan kareem*.

Here at the White House, we now have a tradition of celebrating the sacred days of our various faiths. And these are occasions to reflect on the teachings that so many religions share: to celebrate the diversity that defines our country and to reaffirm one of our most deeply held beliefs that here in America and around the world, people should be free to choose the God that they worship however they choose, to practice their faiths freely, or to practice no faith at all.

For Muslims, Ramadan is a time of reflection, a chance to demonstrate one's devotion to God through prayer and through fasting. But it's also a time for family and friends to come together—as we do tonight—in a spirit of love and respect, to renew our obligations to one another, as well as to renew our commitment to our neighbors and helping the most needy among us. For as the Koran teaches, "Whoever does an atom's weight of good, will see its results."

Throughout our history, Islam has contributed to the character of our country, and Muslim Americans and their good works have helped to build our Nation. And we've seen the results. We've seen those results in generations of Muslim immigrants: farmers and factory workers, helping to lay the railroads and build our cities. Muslim innovators who helped build some of our highest skyscrapers and who helped to unlock the secrets of our universe.

Every day, Muslim Americans are helping to shape the way that we think and the way that we work and the way that we do business. And that's the spirit that we celebrate tonight: the dreamers, the creators whose ideas are pioneering new industries, creating new jobs and unleashing new opportunities for all of us.

We celebrate entrepreneurs like Shazi Visram, whose parents came here from Pakistan and Tanzania to give their children a better life. And as the founder, CEO, and "Chief Mom" of Happy Family—[*laughter*]—Shazi is a leader in affordable, organic foods for children, which makes Michelle very happy. In just 7 years, she's grown to 58 full-time employees, 75 part-time working moms, and they're on track to hit $100 million in revenue this year. So no wonder she's been called a "Rockstar of the New Economy."

By the way, every time that they sell one of their products, they contribute to global efforts to end child hunger. So Shazi is not only just an outstanding businesswoman, but also a leader that all of us can emulate.

We celebrate innovators like Aunim Hossain. In one of his first ventures, he designed a hand-held device to help detect breast cancer. Now, as the creator of Tista Games, he's setting his sights on the video game industry. But Aunim also has a bigger vision, and that's harnessing the talents and energy of hundreds of millions of gamers around the world to do social good. And he imagines applying the same high-quality stories and graphics in his games to the next generation of educational material to help children learn. So we're very appreciative for Aunim for the good work that he's doing.

We celebrate pioneers like Dr. Iya Khalil, whose father came here from Libya to finish his education; she grew up watching him in his lab and dreaming of being a scientist herself. Today, she calls herself a recovering physicist, and she puts her talents to work as an entrepreneur. She cofounded her own biotech research company, which today employs almost

50 people and is a leader in genomic medicine, making it possible for doctors to prescribe personalized treatment plans for patients with diseases like cancer and giving new hope to people around the world. So we thank Iya for her efforts.

So Shazi, Aunim, Iya, and so many of you who have traveled here tonight: Each of you have traveled your own path, but each of you have also lived out an American story. You started with an idea, something no one had done before. You took a leap of faith. And with daring and determination, you brought your dream to life. And that's what we Americans have been doing for more than two centuries. That's what we do every day: We work a little harder, we aim a little higher, and we keep striving to create more opportunity for our children and future generations.

And of course, this isn't just the American Dream, it's the aspiration of people around the world. It's the basic human desire for progress, to find dignity that comes from work, to give our children something better. These yearnings for economic freedom and opportunity, just as much as political freedom, are at the root of so much of the change we've seen around the world in the past few years, including in North Africa and in the Middle East.

And that's why, even as we support citizens seeking to determine their own destiny, a key part of our engagement with Muslim communities around the world has to be supporting economic opportunity and entrepreneurship. So we launched our annual entrepreneurship summit to spur innovation and business growth in Muslim communities. I'm going to be attending one when I go to the ASEAN meeting in Southeast Asia later this year. In my second term, we're going to keep helping young entrepreneurs pursue their dreams and create opportunities, the kind of prosperity that can transform lives around the world.

Whoever does an atom's weight of gold [good]* will see its results. And when I look around the room tonight, beyond the communities you represent, I see all the profound good that's been accomplished. So all of us are seeing the results of your good work: the opportunities to create for your colleagues and your communities and for our country. So I want to thank you for what you do, and for reminding us that our Nation is stronger and more successful when we harness the talents of all Americans, no matter where we come from or what we look like, what our last names are or how we pray.

So God bless you all. May you and your families have a blessed Ramadan. And with that, I know people are hungry—[*laughter*]—let's eat. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. in the State Dining at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Iya Khalil, executive vice president and cofounder, GNS Healthcare.

The President's Weekly Address
July 27, 2013

Hi, everybody. On Wednesday, I spoke about what we need to do as a country to build a better bargain for the middle class: to make sure everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead in the 21st-century economy.

You see, over the past 4½ years, America has fought its way back from the worst recession of our lifetimes. We saved the auto industry, took on a broken health care system, invested in new American technologies to reverse our addiction to foreign oil, and changed a Tax Code too skewed in favor of the wealthiest at the expense of working families.

As a result, our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs over the past 40 months. We produce more renewable energy than ever and more natural gas than anyone. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50

* White House correction.

years. And our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years.

Thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, we've cleared away the rubble of crisis and begun to lay a new foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth.

But as any middle class family will tell you, we're not yet where we need to be. Trends that have been eroding middle class security for decades—technology that makes some jobs obsolete, global competition that makes others moveable, growing inequality and the policies that perpetuate it—all those things still exist, and in some ways, the recession made them worse.

Reversing these trends must be Washington's highest priority. It sure is mine. But over the past couple of years in particular, Washington has taken its eye off the ball. An endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals shift focus from what needs to be done. And as Washington prepares to enter another budget debate, the stakes could not be higher. The choices we make now will determine whether or not every American has a fighting chance in the 21st century.

If we don't make the investments necessary to make America a magnet for good jobs—if we don't invest in education and manufacturing and research and our transportation and information networks—we might as well hit the pause button while the rest of the world forges ahead in a global economy. And that's certainly not going to fix what ails the middle class.

Here's what will: a strategy that builds on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America and what it takes to work your way into the middle class; good jobs that pay good wages; an education that prepares our children and our workers for the global competition they'll face; homeownership that's built on a solid foundation, where buyers and lenders play by the same set of rules; affordable health care that's there for you when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; and more chances for folks to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work for it.

Over the next several weeks, in cities and towns across the country, I'll continue to lay out my ideas in each of these areas. Because reversing the forces that have conspired against the middle class for decades will require more than short-term thinking; it will require a long-term American strategy, based on steady, persistent effort.

I know there are members of both parties who understand what's at stake, and I'm open to ideas from across the political spectrum, as long as they meet the test of strengthening the prospects of hard-working families. But repealing Obamacare, gutting critical investments in our future, threatening to default on the bills this country has already racked up, or shutting down the Government just because I'm for keeping it open—none of those thing add up to an economic plan. None of that will take this country where it needs to go.

We can do this if we work together. It won't be easy, but if we take a few bold steps, and if Washington is willing to shake off its complacency and set aside some of the slash-and-burn partisanship we've seen in recent years, our economy will keep getting stronger.

And as long as I have the privilege of holding this office, I will spend every minute of every day doing everything in my power to make this economy work for working Americans again, to build that better bargain for the middle class, to make sure that the American Dream is something that's achievable for everybody, not just today, but for decades to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6:20 p.m. on July 25 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on July 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 27.

Remarks at the Korean War Veterans Memorial
July 27, 2013

Thank you so much. Thank you. Please be seated. Good morning. *Annyong haseyo.*

Secretaries Hagel, Jewell, and Shinseki; Admiral Winnefeld; General Jung; all our friends from the Republic of Korea, including the legendary General Paik Sun-yup; distinguished guests; and most of all, veterans of the Korean war and your families. To our veterans, many in your eighties, a few of you in your old uniforms, which still fit—[*laughter*]—let me just say, you look outstanding. And I would ask that all United States, Republic of Korea, and other veterans who fought, I would ask those who can stand to please stand so that we can properly honor you here today.

July 27, 1953, 60 years ago today, in the village of Panmunjom, in a barren room, the generals picked up their pens and signed their names to the agreement spread before them. That night, as the armistice took hold, the guns of war thundered no more. Along the jagged front, men emerged from their muddy trenches. A marine raised his bugle and played "Taps." And a soldier spoke for millions when he said, "Thank God it is over."

In the days that followed, both sides pulled back, leaving a demilitarized zone between them. Soldiers emptied their sandbags and tore down their bunkers. Our POWs emerged from the camps. Our troops boarded ships and steamed back across the ocean. And describing the moment he passed under the Golden Gate Bridge, one of those soldiers wrote, "We suddenly knew we had survived the war, and we were home."

Yet ask these veterans here today and many will tell you, compared to other wars, theirs was a different kind of homecoming. Unlike the Second World War, Korea did not galvanize our country. These veterans did not return to parades. Unlike Vietnam, Korea did not tear at our country. These veterans did not return to protest. Among many Americans, tired of war, there was, it seemed, a desire to forget, to move on. As one of these veterans recalls: "We just came home and took off our uniforms and went to work. That was about it."

You, our veterans of Korea, deserved better. And down the decades, our Nation has worked to right that wrong, including here, with this eternal memorial, where the measure of your sacrifice is enshrined for all time. Because here in America, no war should ever be forgotten, and no veteran should ever be overlooked. And after the armistice, a reporter wrote, "When men talk in some distant time with faint remembrance of the Korean war, the shining deeds will live." The shining deeds will live.

On this 60th anniversary, perhaps the highest tribute we can offer our veterans of Korea is to do what should have been done the day you come home. In our hurried lives, let us pause. Let us listen. Let these veterans carry us back to the days of their youth, and let us be awed by their shining deeds.

Listen closely and hear the story of a generation: veterans of World War II recalled to duty; husbands kissing their wives goodbye yet again; young men—some just boys, 18, 19, 20 years old—leaving behind everyone they loved "to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met." Let's never forget all the daughters who left home, especially our heroic nurses who saved so many. Our women in Korea also served with honor. They also gave their lives.

Listen and hear how these Americans faced down their fears and did their duty: clutching their rifles; hearing the bugles in the distance; knowing that waves of enemy fighters would soon be upon them; in ships offshore, climbing down the ropes into the landing craft, knowing some of them would not leave that beach; on the tarmacs and flight decks, taking off in their Corsairs and Sabres, knowing that they might not return to this Earth.

Listen and hear of their gallantry, often outnumbered and outgunned, in some of the most brutal combat in modern history: how they held the line at the Pusan Perimeter; how they landed at Inchon and turned the tide of the

war; how, surrounded and freezing, they battled their way out of Chosin Reservoir; and how they fought, foxhole by foxhole, mountain after mountain, day and night, at the Punchbowl and Heartbreak Ridge, Old Baldy and Pork Chop Hill.

Listen and hear how perhaps the only thing worse than the enemy was the weather: the searing heat, the choking dust of summer, the deep snow and bitter cold of winter, so cold their weapons could jam, so cold their food would turn to ice. And surely no one endured more than our POWs in those hellish camps, where the torment was unimaginable. Our POWs from Korea are some of the strongest men our Nation has ever produced, and today we honor them all, those who never came home and those who are here today.

Listen to these veterans, and you'll also hear of the resilience of the human spirit. There was compassion: starving prisoners who shared their food. There was love: men who charged machine guns and reached for grenades so their brothers might live. There was the dark humor of war, as when someone misunderstood the code name for mortar rounds—"Tootsie Rolls"—and then shipped our troops thousands of Tootsie Rolls candies.

And there was hope, as told in a letter home written by a soldier in the 7th Cavalry. Marching through the snow and ice, something caught his eye: a young lieutenant up ahead and from the muzzle of his rifle hung a pair of tiny baby booties, "swinging silently in the wind . . . like tiny bells." They were sent by the lieutenant's wife, pregnant with their first child, and she promised to send ribbons: blue if a boy, pink if a girl. But as the war ground on, those soldiers were scattered. Until one day, on a Korean road, he spotted the lieutenant again. "Swinging gaily in the first rays of the morning sun," the soldier wrote, were those booties, "and fluttering below them was the brightest, bluest piece of ribbon I have ever seen."

Six decades on, these moments may seem like faint remembrances of a distant time. But for you—our Korean veterans and your families—I know it must feel sometimes just like just yesterday. And on days such as this, you're back there once more. For Korea was the fire that helped to forge you.

As we listen to the story of your service, I say let us also learn, because your lives hold lessons for us today. Korea taught us the perils when we fail to prepare. After the Second World War, a rapid drawdown left our troops underequipped, so that in the early days of Korea, their rockets literally bounced off enemy tanks. Today, as we end a decade of war and reorient our forces for the future, as we make hard choices at home, our allies and adversaries must know: The United States of America will maintain the strongest military the world has ever known, bar none, always. That is what we do.

Korea taught us that, as a people, we are stronger when we stand as one. On President Truman's orders, our troops served together in integrated units. And the heroism of African Americans in Korea—and Latinos and Asian Americans and Native Americans—advanced the idea: If these Americans could live and work together over there, surely we could do the same thing here at home.

Change came slowly. And we continue our long journey toward a more perfect Union. But for the great strides we have made toward the ideals of equality and opportunity, we must give thanks to our Korean war veterans who helped point the way.

Korea reminds us that when we send our troops into battle, they deserve the support and gratitude of the American people, especially when they come home. Today let us remember that right now our sons and daughters continue to risk their lives, give their lives, in Afghanistan. And as this war ends and we welcome them home, we will make it our mission to give them the respect and the care and the opportunities that they have earned.

And Korea reminds us that our obligations to our fallen and their families endure long after the battle ends. To this day, 7,910 Americans are still missing from the Korean war. And we will not stop working until we give these families a full accounting of their loved ones: like Sergeant First Class William Robinson, 26 years old, missing for 63 years. This week, in

Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, the Robinsons will welcome their uncle home and finally lay him to rest with full military honors.

Freedom is not free. And in Korea, no one paid a heavier price than those who gave all: 36,574 American patriots and, among our allies, more than 1 million of our South Korean friends, soldiers, and civilians. That July day, when the fighting finally ended, not far from where it began, some suggested, this sacrifice had been for naught; they summed it up with a phrase: "Die for a tie."

It took many decades for this memorial to gain its rightful place on this great Mall where we tell our American story. It has, perhaps, taken even longer to see clearly and understand fully the true legacy of your service. But here today we can say with confidence, that war was no tie. Korea was a victory. When 50 million South Koreans live in freedom—a vibrant democracy, one of the world's most dynamic economies, in stark contrast to the repression and poverty of the North—that is a victory, and that is your legacy.

When our soldiers stand firm along the DMZ, when our South Korean friends can go about their lives, knowing that the commitment of the United States to the security of the Republic of Korea will never waver, that is a victory, and that is your legacy.

When our allies across the Asia-Pacific know—as we have proven in Korea for 60 straight years—that the United States will remain a force for peace and security and prosperity, that's a victory; that's your legacy.

And for generations to come, when history recalls how free nations banded together in a long cold war and how we won that war, let it be said that Korea was the first battle, where freedom held its ground and free peoples refused to yield. That too is your victory, your legacy.

Most of all, your legacy burns brightest right here, in a grateful Nation that reveres you, in the loving families that cherish you, like that young soldier with those baby booties swinging from his rifle. Ever since the war, the story of that soldier has been passed among our Korean war vets. Some of you may have heard it before. And many may have wondered, what became of that soldier? Today, six decades later, we now know, because we found him. His was—Richard Shank from St. Louis, Missouri. For his valor in Korea, he earned the Silver Star. Yes, Dick survived the war. He returned home. He held his baby boy in his arms. He was able to be a father to his son.

But this story doesn't end there, because like so many of you, Dick continued to serve in uniform. His son grew into a man, got married, had children of his own. Those children are now adults themselves, scattered across the country. And like so many American families, they still speak with pride of their grandfather's service in Korea.

Today, Dick Shank lives in Gainesville, Florida, and I believe he's watching us this morning. He's 84 years old, recovering from a recent fall while roller skating. [*Laughter*] "Life is short," he says, "and I just keep on living it." And one of the ways he keeps living it is by meeting up every year with his buddies from Korea and recalling the time they shared together in that fight, which ended 60 years ago today.

Veterans of the Korean war: In the spring of your youth, you learned how short and precious life can be. And because of you, millions of people can keep on living it, in freedom and in peace. Your lives are an inspiration. Your service will never be forgotten. You have the thanks of a grateful nation. And your shining deeds will live, now and forever.

May God bless those who gave all in Korea. May God bless you and your families. May God bless the alliances that helped secure our prosperity and our security. And may God continue to bless these United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell; Gen. Jung Seung-jo, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. Paik Sun-yup, former Army Chief of Staff, of South Korea; Col. David R. Hughes, USA (Ret.); and Lt. Richard G. Shank, USA (Ret.).

Statement on the Death of Former Representative Corrine C. "Lindy" Boggs
July 27, 2013

Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to the family and loved ones of Lindy Boggs. Her legacy as a champion of women's and civil rights over her nine terms in office as the first woman elected to the United States Congress from Louisiana will continue to inspire generations to come.

Remarks Honoring the 2012 World Series Champion San Francisco Giants
July 29, 2013

Well, everybody, please have a seat. Welcome to the White House on this beautiful afternoon. And congratulations to the San Francisco Giants on their second World Series title in 3 years. They're making this a habit. [*Laughter*]

I want to start by recognizing all the fans of the Orange and Black with us today, including San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee is in the house. One of your number-one fans in Washington, Leader Nancy Pelosi is here, season ticket holder. All the Members of Congress that we've got here today, we're glad you guys are here.

And we want to recognize as well Larry Baer and GM Brian Sabean for building yet another championship team. Give them a big round of applause. And of course, we've got somebody who keeps on looking younger every time I see him, the Say Hey Kid, Willie Mays in the house. And of course, we've got a big—give a big congratulations to Manager Bruce Bochy, who just last week joined greats like John McGraw and Joe Torre as one of only 21 managers to win 1,500 games. That is an incredible honor. Give Bruce a big round of applause. Congratulations.

Now, it wasn't that long ago that these guys were already here celebrating their last World Series title. Some things apparently don't change. The Giants still won behind stellar pitching and smothering defense and timely hitting. And even though they used a different closer down the stretch, this one still had a "beard to fear." [*Laughter*]

On the other hand, some things do change. In 2010, it took five games to close out the World Series. This year it only took four. There are some new faces standing behind me, some new nicknames. You got the Reverend. You've got Blockbuster. We've even got new haircuts. Where's Tim? [*Laughter*] There he is. See, you don't even recognize him anymore. [*Laughter*]

And of course, there were new moments to write into the history books as well. During the regular season, Matt Cain threw the franchise's first perfect game with a record-tying 14 strikeouts. Posey returned from injury—I wish I was that young, you just kind of snap back—comes back, hits .336, with 24 home runs and earns the National League MVP.

In the playoffs, the Giants dropped the first two games to the Reds, forcing them to run off three straight wins to stay alive. And then against the Cardinals, they had to come back from a 3-to-1 hole to win in seven games. In all, this team faced elimination a total of six times in the playoffs. It's no wonder that your own fans still refer to Giants baseball as torture. [*Laughter*]

But in the World Series, they decided to take it a little easier on Giants fans. In game one, Pablo Sandoval came out swinging, with a record-tying three homeruns on his way to becoming the World Series MVP. Three games later, brooms were out; it was time for more fireworks over North Beach and another parade down Market Street.

And with these two championships, this team has added another chapter to the storied legacy of players like Mays and McCovey and Perry. And I think it's time to add a few more names to that list: Lincecum and Cain and Posey and Kung Fu Panda. [*Laughter*]

So as the Giants prove every day, baseball can be even bigger than All-Stars and Cy Young winners. The Junior Giants program uses baseball to teach integrity and leadership and teamwork to more than 20,000 children. The team recently won a national award for their support of the LGBT community. Two years ago, the Giants became the first professional sports franchise to record an "It Gets Better" video to help bullied youth.

I'm proud to announce that next season, they're planning to turn the centerfield bleachers at AT&T Park into what's believed to be the first-ever edible garden in a major American sports facility. With rows of kale and strawberries and eggplant, the Giants are going to help encourage local youth to eat healthy, even at the ballpark.

I should add, even Michelle would say it's okay to have a hotdog once in a while though. [*Laughter*] I don't want everybody to get carried away and think they have to have kale every time they go to the ballpark. [*Laughter*]

So today we are proud to honor the Giants not only for being champions on the diamond, but also being champions for the entire San Francisco community as well. They represent their city proudly, and they do a great job at it.

And on that note, let's hear it one more time for the World Champion San Francisco Giants.

[*At this point, San Francisco Giants President and Chief Executive Officer Laurence M. Baer thanked the President, and Manager Bruce Bochy and catcher Gerald D. "Buster" Posey presented a World Series ball and bat to the President. The President then concluded his remarks as follows.*]

I got a World Series ball and bat, and you should know that I can't read any of their signatures. [*Laughter*] But it's greatly appreciated. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brian R. Sabean, senior vice president and general manager, Willie H. Mays, Jr., assistant to the president and former center fielder, Sergio Romo, Timothy L. Lincecum, and Matt Cain, pitchers, Hunter A. "Reverend" Pence, outfielder, Marcos "Blockbuster" Scutaro, second baseman, Pablo E. "Kung Fu Panda" Sandoval, third baseman, Willie L. McCovey, senior adviser and former first baseman, and Gaylord J. Perry, former pitcher, San Francisco Giants; and Joseph P. Torre, former manager, New York Yankees.

Statement on the Resumption of Peace Negotiations Between Israel and the Palestinian Authority
July 29, 2013

I am pleased that Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas have accepted Secretary Kerry's invitation to formally resume direct final status negotiations and have sent senior negotiating teams to Washington for the first round of meetings. This is a promising step forward, though hard work and hard choices remain ahead.

During my March visit to the region, I experienced firsthand the profound desire for peace among both Israelis and Palestinians, which reinforced my belief that peace is both possible and necessary. I deeply appreciate Secretary Kerry's tireless work with the parties to develop a common basis for resuming direct talks and commend both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas for their leadership in coming to the table.

The most difficult work of these negotiations is ahead, and I am hopeful that both the Israelis and Palestinians will approach these talks in good faith and with sustained focus and determination. The United States stands ready to support them throughout these negotiations, with the goal of achieving two states living side by side in peace and security.

I am pleased that Ambassador Martin Indyk will lead the U.S. negotiating team as U.S. Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations. Ambassador Indyk brings unique experience and insight to this role, which will allow him to contribute immediately as the parties begin down the tough, but necessary, path of negotiations.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Lebanon
July 29, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Lebanon that was declared in Executive Order 13441 of August 1, 2007, is to continue in effect beyond August 1, 2013.

Certain ongoing activities, such as continuing arms transfers to Hizballah that include increasingly sophisticated weapons systems, undermine Lebanese sovereignty, contribute to political and economic instability in the region, and continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13441 with respect to Lebanon.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Amazon Chattanooga Fulfillment Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee
July 30, 2013

Hello, Chattanooga! Hey! Well, it is good to be back in Tennessee. It's great to be here at Amazon.

I want to thank Lydia for the introduction and sharing her story. Give Lydia a big round of applause. So this is something here. I just finished getting a tour of just one little corner of this massive facility, size of 28 football fields. Last year, during the busiest day of the Christmas rush, customers around the world ordered more than 300 items from Amazon every second, and a lot of those traveled through this building. So this is kind of like the North Pole of the South right here. Got a bunch of good-looking elves here.

Now, before we start, I want to recognize your general manager, Mike Thomas; my tour guide and your vice president, Dave Clark; you've got the mayor of Chattanooga, Andy Berke; and you've got one of the finest gentlemen I know, your Congressman, Jim Cooper. So thank you all for being here.

So I've come here today to talk a little more about something I was discussing last week, and that's what we need to do as a country to secure a better bargain for the middle class: a

national strategy to make sure that every single person who's willing to work hard in this country has a chance to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

Now, you heard from Lydia, so you know—because many of you went through it—over the past 4½ years, we've been fighting our way back from the worst recession since the Great Depression, and it cost millions of Americans their jobs and their homes and their savings. And part of what it did was, it laid bare the long-term erosion that's been happening when it comes to middle class security.

But because the American people are resilient, we bounced back. Together, we've righted the ship. We took on a broken health care system. We invested in new American technologies to reverse our addiction to foreign oil, changed a Tax Code that had become tilted too much in favor of the wealthy at the expense of working families, saved an auto industry. And thanks to GM and the UAW working together, we're bringing jobs back here to America, including 1,800 autoworkers in Spring Hills; 1,800 workers in Spring Hills are on the job today where a plant was once closed.

Today, our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs over the last 40 months. This year, we're off to our best private sector jobs growth since 1999. We now sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. We produce more renewable energy than ever before; we produce more natural gas than anybody else in the world. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years.

So thanks to hard-working folks like you, thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, we've been able to clear away some of the rubble from the financial crisis. We've started to lay a new foundation for a stronger, more durable America, the kind of economic growth that's broad based, the foundation required to make this century another American century.

But as I said last week, and as any middle class family will tell you: We're not there yet. Even before the financial crisis hit, we were going through a decade where a few at the top were doing better and better, but most families were working harder and harder just to get by. And reversing that trend should be Washington's highest priority. It's my highest priority.

But so far, for most of this year, we've seen an endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals. And we keep on shifting our way—shifting our attention away from what we should be focused on, which is, how do we strengthen the middle class and grow the economy for everybody? And as Washington heads towards yet another budget debate, the stakes couldn't be higher.

And that's why I'm visiting cities and towns like this one, to lay out my ideas for how we can build on the cornerstone of what it means to be middle class in America: a good job with good wages, a good education; a home to call your own; affordable health care that's there for you when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; more chances for folks to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work for it; and most importantly, the chance to pass on a better future for our kids.

So I'm doing a series of speeches over the next several weeks, but I came to Chattanooga today to talk about the first and most important cornerstone of middle class security, and that's a good job in a durable, growing industry.

It's hard to get the other stuff going if you don't have a good job. And the truth is, everything I'm going to be talking about over the next several weeks really is about jobs. Because preparing our children and our workers for the global competition they'll face, that's about jobs. A housing finance system that makes it easier and safer to buy and build new homes, that's about jobs in the construction industry. Health care that frees you from the fear of losing everything after you've worked so hard and then having the freedom to maybe start your own business because you know you'll be able to get health care, that's about jobs. And obviously, retirement benefits speak to the quality of our jobs.

And let me say this, something everybody here understands: Jobs are about more than

just paying the bills. Jobs are about more than just statistics. We've never just defined having a job as having a paycheck here in America. A job is a source of pride; it's a source of dignity. It's the way you look after your family. It's proof that you're doing the right things and meeting your responsibilities and contributing to the fabric of your community and helping to build the country. That's what a job is all about. It's not just about a paycheck. It's not just about paying the bills. It's also about knowing that what you're doing is important, that it counts.

So we should be doing everything we can as a country to create more good jobs that pay good wages. Period.

Now, here's the thing, Chattanooga, the problem is not that we don't have ideas about how we could create even more jobs. We've got a lot of ideas out there. There are plenty of independent economists, plenty of business owners, people from both parties, agree on some of the ingredients that we need for creating good jobs. And you've heard them debated again and again over these past few years. I've proposed a lot of these ideas myself. Just 2 years ago, I announced the "American Jobs Act," full of ideas that every independent economist said would create more jobs. Some were passed by Congress. But I've got to admit, most of them weren't.

Sometimes, there were ideas that historically had Republican support, and for some reason, suddenly, Republicans didn't want to support them anymore: putting people back to work rebuilding America's infrastructure; equipping our kids and our workers with the best skills; leading the world in scientific research that helps to pave the way for new jobs in new industries; accelerating our clean energy and natural gas revolutions; fixing a broken immigration system so that American workers aren't undercut, undermined because some businesses are unscrupulous and hiring folks and not paying them decent wages.

Independent economists say immigration reform would boost our economy by more than a trillion dollars. So we've got ideas out there we know can work. And if we don't make these investments, if we don't make these reforms, then we might as well be waving the white flag to the rest of the world, because they're moving forward. They're not slowing down. China, Germany, India, they're going. And we can't just sit by and do nothing. Doing nothing doesn't help the middle class.

So today I came here to offer a framework that might help break through some of the political logjam in Washington and try to get Congress to start moving on some of these proven ideas. But let me briefly outline some of the areas I think we need to focus on if we want to create good jobs, with good wages, in durable industries, areas that will fuel our future growth.

Number one, jobs in American manufacturing. Over the past 4 years, for the first time since the 1990s, the number of manufacturing jobs in America hasn't gone down, it's actually gone up. So the trend lines are good; now we've got to build on that progress. I want to offer new incentives for manufacturers not to ship jobs overseas, but to bring them back here to America. I want new tax credits so communities hit hardest by plant closures can attract new investment.

In my State of the Union Address, I asked Congress to build on a successful pilot program we've set up. We want to create not just 15 manufacturing innovation institutes that connect businesses and universities and Federal agencies to help communities left behind by global competition to become centers of high-tech jobs, today I'm asking Congress to build on this bipartisan support and triple that number from 15 to 45: these hubs, where we're getting businesses, universities, communities all to work together to develop centers of high-tech industries all throughout the United States that allow us to be at the forefront of the next revolution of manufacturing. I want it made here in the United States of America. I don't want that happening overseas.

Number two—I talked about this last week—jobs rebuilding our infrastructure. I look at this amazing facility, and you guys, you don't miss a beat. I mean, you've got these packages coming out. You've got dog food and

Kindles and beard trimmers and—[*laughter*]. I mean, there's all kinds of stuff around here. But once it's packed up, it's got to get to the customer. And how quickly and how dependably it gets to the customer depends on, do we have good roads? Do we have good bridges? Do we have state-of-the-art airports?

We've got about $2 trillion of deferred maintenance here in this country. So let's put more construction workers back on the job doing the work America needs done. These are vital projects that Amazon needs, businesses all across the country need, like widening Route 27 here in Chattanooga, deepening the Jacksonville Port that I visited last week. These are projects vital to our national pride.

We're going to be breaking ground this week at the St. Louis Arch. Congress should pass what I've called my Fix-It-First plan to put people to work immediately on our most urgent repairs, like the 100,000 bridges that are old enough to qualify for Medicare. That will create good middle class jobs right now. [*Applause*] Right now. And we should partner with the private sector to upgrade what businesses like Amazon need most. We should have a modern air traffic control system to keep planes running on time. We should have modern power grids and pipelines to survive a storm. We should have modern schools to prepare our kids for the jobs of tomorrow.

Number three, we need to keep creating good jobs in energy: in wind and solar and natural gas. Those new energy sources are reducing energy costs. They're reducing dangerous carbon pollution. They're reducing our dependence on foreign oil. So now is not the time to gut investments in American technology. Now is the time to double down on renewable energy and biofuels and electric vehicles and to put money into the research that will shift our cars and trucks off oil for good.

And let me tell you, cheaper costs of natural gas is a huge boost to our businesses here in America, so we should develop it even more. We've got to do it in a way that protects our air and our water for our children and future generations, but we can do that. We've got the technology to do it.

Number four, we've got to export more. We want to send American goods all around the world. A year ago, I signed a new trade agreement with Korea, because they were selling a lot of Hyundais here, but we weren't selling a lot of GM cars over there. Since we signed that deal, our Big Three automakers are selling 18 percent more cars in Korea than they were.

So now we've got to help more of our businesses do the same thing. I'm asking Congress for the authority to negotiate the best trade deals possible for our workers and combine it with robust training and assistance measures to make sure our workers have the support and the skills they need for this new global competition. And we're going to have to sharpen our competitive edge in the global job marketplace.

Two years ago, we created something called SelectUSA. This is a coordinated effort to attract foreign companies looking to invest and create jobs here in the United States. And today I'm directing my Cabinet to expand these efforts. And this October, I'm going to bring business leaders from around the world, and I'm going to connect them to State leaders and local leaders like your mayor who are ready to prove there's no better place to do business than right here in the United States of America.

Number five, let's help more than—let's do more to help the more than 4 million long-term unemployed Americans that are out there. One of the problems that happens is, a lot of folks, they lose their jobs during this really bad recession through no fault of their own. They've got what it takes to fill that job opening, but because they've been out of work so long employers won't even give their application a fair look.

So I'm challenging CEOs to do more to get these Americans back on their feet. And I'm going to bring together the CEOs and companies that are putting in place some of the best practices for recruiting and training and hiring workers who have been out of work for a long time, but want the chance to show that they're ready to go back to work.

And at the same time, I'm calling on our businesses to do more for their workers.

Amazon is a great example of what's possible. What you're doing here at Amazon with your Career Choice Program pays 95 percent of the tuition for employees who want to earn skills in fields with high demand, not just, by the way, jobs here at Amazon, but jobs anywhere: computer-aided design or nursing. I talked to Jeff Bezos yesterday, and he was so proud of the fact that he wants to see every employee at Amazon continually upgrade their skills and improve. And if they've got a dream they want to pursue, Amazon wants to help them pursue it.

That's the kind of approach that we need from America's businesses. Offering training programs, health care, retirement plans, paying better wages—that's not just the right thing to do, it's actually good for your bottom line. A recent study shows that when a company makes the list of the 100 best companies to work for in America, its share price outperforms its competitors, because the stock market and investors, they know if a company has employees that are motivated and happy, that business is more likely to succeed. [*Applause*] That business is more likely to succeed.

And because nobody who works full-time in America should have to live in poverty, I'm going to keep on making the case and fighting for the fact that we need to raise our minimum wage, because right now it's in lower terms than it was when Ronald Reagan took office. When folks have more money in their pockets, that's good for Amazon; it means your customers have a little more money. They can order a little more of that protein powder. [*Laughter*] I noticed a lot of folks were ordering protein power. Everybody is trying to get bulked up. [*Laughter*]

So here's—those are some of the ideas that we're out there, we're promoting. We're not lacking for ideas, we're just lacking action, especially out of Washington.

For most of the past 2 years, Washington has just taken its eye off the ball when it comes to the middle class. And I'll tell you, look, there are a growing number of—the good news is, there are a growing number of Republican Senators who are trying to work with Democrats to get some stuff done. That's good news.

The bad news is that rather than keep our focus on what should be our priority—which is growing our economy and creating good middle class jobs—we've seen a certain faction of Republicans in Congress hurt a fragile recovery by saying that they wouldn't pay the very bills that Congress racked up in the first place, threatening to shut down the people's Government if they can't get rid of Obamacare. Instead of reducing our deficits with a scalpel to get rid of programs we don't need, but keep vital investments that we do, this same group has kept in place this meat cleaver called the sequester that is just slashing all kinds of important investments in education and research and our military. All the things that are needed to make this country a magnet for good middle class jobs, those things are being cut.

And these moves don't just hurt our economy in the long term, they hurt our middle class right now. The independent Congressional Budget Office estimates that the cuts that are being made right now in Washington will cost our economy 750,000 jobs this year, 900,000 fewer jobs next year. And a lot of the jobs at risk are at small businesses that contract with our military or our Federal agencies.

Over the past 4 years, another 700,000 workers at the Federal, State, and local levels of government have lost their jobs. These are cops and firefighters, and about half of them are people who work in our schools. Those are real jobs. It doesn't help a company like Amazon when a teacher or a cop or a firefighter loses their job. They don't have money to place an order. That's hundreds of thousands of customers who have less money to spend.

If those layoffs had not happened, if public sector employees grew like they did in the past two recessions, the unemployment rate would be 6.5 instead of 7.5. Our economy would be much better off, and the deficit would still be going down because we'd be getting more tax revenue.

So the point is, if Washington spent as much time and energy these past 2 years figuring out how to grow our economy and grow our middle class as it's spent manufacturing crises in pursuit of a cut-at-all-costs approach to defi-

cits, we'd be much better off. [*Applause*] We'd be much better off.

And it's not like we don't have to cut our deficits. As a share of the economy, we've cut our deficits by nearly half since I took office—half. And they're projected to go down even further, but there's a right way to do it and a wrong way to do it. And we should do it in a way that actually helps middle class families instead of hurts them.

I've told Republicans that if they're serious about a balanced, long-term fiscal plan that replaces harmful budget cuts, that would get serious about a long-term plan that prevents those 900,000 jobs from being lost, that helps grow the economy, that helps the middle class—I am ready to go. But we can't lose sight of our north star. We can't allow an impasse over long-term fiscal challenges to distract us from what the middle class needs right now.

So here's the bottom line: If folks in Washington really want a grand bargain, how about a grand bargain for middle class jobs? [*Applause*] How about a grand bargain for middle class jobs?

I don't want to go through the same old arguments where I propose an idea and the Republicans just say no because it's my idea. So I'm going to try offering something that serious people in both parties should be able to support: a deal that simplifies the Tax Code for our businesses and creates good jobs with good wages for middle class folks who work at those businesses.

Right now—everybody knows this—our Tax Code is so riddled with loopholes and special interest tax breaks that a lot of companies who are doing the right thing and investing in America pay 35 percent in their taxes; corporations who have got fancy accountants and stash their money overseas, they pay little or nothing in taxes. That's not fair, and it's not good for the economy here.

So I'm willing to simplify our Tax Code: closes those loopholes, ends incentives to ship jobs overseas, lowers the rate for businesses that are creating jobs right here in America, provides tax incentives for manufacturers that bring jobs home to the United States. Let's simplify taxes for small-business owners, give them incentives to invest so they can spend less time filling out complicated forms, more time expanding and hiring.

I'm willing to do all that; that should help businesses and help them grow. But if we're going to give businesses a better deal, then we're also going to have to give workers a better deal too. I want to use some of the money that we save by closing these loopholes to create more good construction jobs with infrastructure initiatives that I already talked about. We can build a broader network of high-tech manufacturing hubs that leaders from both parties can support. We can help our community colleges arm our workers with the skills that a global economy demands. All these things would benefit the middle class right now and benefit our economy in the years to come.

So again, here's the bottom line: I'm willing to work with Republicans on reforming our corporate Tax Code, as long as we use the money from transitioning to a simpler tax system for a significant investment in creating middle class jobs. That's the deal.

And I'm just going to keep on throwing ideas out there to see if something takes. [*Laughter*] I'm going to lay out my ideas to give the middle class a better shot. But now it's time for Republicans to lay out their ideas.

If they've got a better plan to bring back more manufacturing jobs here to Tennessee and around the country, then let them know—let me know. I want to hear them. If they've got a better plan to create jobs rebuilding our infrastructure or to help workers earn the high-tech skills that they need, then they should offer up these ideas.

But I've got to tell you, just gutting our environmental protection, that's not a jobs plan. Gutting investments in education, that's not a jobs plan. They keep on talking about this—an oil pipeline coming down from Canada that's estimated to create about 50 permanent jobs; that's not a jobs plan. Wasting the country's time by taking something like 40 meaningless votes to repeal Obamacare is not a jobs plan. [*Applause*] That's not a jobs plan.

So let's get serious. They're—look, I want to tell everybody here the truth. And you know, look, I know that the politics for Obama aren't always great in Tennessee. I understand that. But I want everybody to just hear the honest truth. I've run my last campaign, so I don't need to spin.

And here's the truth: There are no gimmicks that create jobs. There are no simple tricks to grow the economy. Growing the economy, making sure that the middle class is strong, it's like getting in shape. You can't just go on the muffin and doughnut diet and the latest fad and lose weight. You've got to work out, and you've got to eat better. Right? Well, the same is true for our economy. The same is true for helping the middle class.

We've got to have a serious, steady, long-term American strategy to reverse the long-term erosion of middle class security and give everybody a fair shot. And we know what we have to do. It involves education. It involves infrastructure. It involves research. It involves good energy policy. And we just have to stay at it. More good jobs that pay decent wages, a better bargain for the middle class, an economy that grows from the middle out—that's got to be our focus.

We can't be getting into a whole bunch of fads and pretend like you roll back Obamacare and suddenly, all these jobs are going to be created, because the middle class was struggling before I came into office. The middle class was losing ground before I came into office. Jobs were getting shipped overseas before Obamacare was in place. So we've got to be honest. We've got to be honest about the challenges we face, but also the opportunities that are out there.

And that's what I'm going to be focused on not just for the next few months. I'm going to be focused for every one of the 1,270 days I've got left in my Presidency on how to make sure that we've got more opportunity and more security for everybody who is willing to work hard in this country. That's where I believe America needs to go. And we can do it if we work together, Chattanooga. Let's get to work.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lydia Flanders, employee, Amazon Chattanooga Fulfillment Center; and Dave Clark, vice president of worldwide operations and customer service, and Jeffrey P. Bezos, president, chief executive officer, and chairman of the board, Amazon.com, Inc.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Nancy J. Schiffer, Kent Y. Hirozawa, Mark G. Pearce, Harry I. Johnson III, and Philip A. Miscimarra as Members of the National Labor Relations Board

July 30, 2013

I welcome today's confirmation of Nancy Schiffer, Kent Hirozawa, Mark Pearce, Harry Johnson III, and Philip Miscimarra to the National Labor Relations Board. A critical part of our effort to strengthen the middle class is ensuring that every American who works hard has a chance to succeed. That means providing wages people can live on, safe working conditions, and real opportunities to get ahead. Every day, the NLRB is focused on the concerns of working Americans, from eliminating unfair labor practices to upholding the right of employees to join a union and bargain collectively with their employers. I applaud the Senate for putting in place a full Board and look forward to working together on other steps we can take to grow our economy.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Women's Basketball Champion University of Connecticut Huskies

July 31, 2013

The President. Everybody, have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Congratulations to the NCAA Champion UConn Huskies. Congratulations to Coach Auriemma on your record-tying eighth national championship. I see this guy too much. [*Laughter*] Keep in mind, a lot of Presidents don't even get 8 years in the White House. [*Laughter*] He's spent more time than some Presidents in the White House. [*Laughter*] And he's not term limited, so he can just keep on going.

We've got UConn president, Susan Herbst is here. Where did she go? There she is up here. I wasn't sure where she was sitting. We've got some outstanding Huskies fans in the house, including several proud members of your congressional delegation. So give them a big round of applause.

Probably the most important person here is not Coach Geno, but Coach Geno's mom, who is here. So please give her a big round of applause—[*applause*]—who is so proud. And she's gorgeous. And that's where you got a good head of hair. [*Laughter*] So I have to say to the Huskies, I've missed you guys. It's been, what, a couple years? Seniors Heather Buck, Caroline Doty made the trip to the White House in 2009. So they're old—this is old hat for them. Kelly Faris joined them in 2010. Now, back there, they were in the middle of a 90-game winning streak.

I reminded Geno at the time, when I called him, that over the first 23 months I was in office, he didn't lose once. He just pointed out to me that when they won the championship, I went on to win reelection. So he thinks we've got a good thing going here. [*Laughter*]

Now, most years, I think for most teams, being a champion isn't about dominating the way that you did back then. It's about being at your best when the stakes are highest. And that's what made this team so special.

To get that national title, they had to go through a team that, let's face it, had had your number during some previous games: Notre Dame. Heading into this season's tournament you had to play—you had played them three times, you had lost three, that heartbreaker in the Big East finals.

After that game, some teams might have lowered their sights. But rather than get discouraged, Geno gathered you together in the locker room, I understand, and said, "I'm going to show you how to win a championship." And as Kelly pointed out, Geno is pretty good at his job. He knows how to win championships.

So it looked tough at the time, but these folks didn't stop believing in themselves. I have to confess that my bracketology needs some work. [*Laughter*]

Team member. Mm-hmm.

The President. Mm-hmm. [*Laughter*] Somebody back there is all, "Mm-hmm." [*Laughter*]

Breanna Stewart had the game of her life, became the first freshman in 25 years to be named most outstanding player in the Final Four. Give her a big round of applause. Hey! Bria Hartley, Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis, and Kelly Faris earned their spots on the all-tournament team. After losing their first three games against Notre Dame by a combined 12 points, won the last one by 18.

After that, no matter how talented Louisville was, there wasn't much doubt that you'd take another title home to Storrs or that thousands of fans would be waiting to join them in the celebration. Because as any UConn fan will tell you, folks just love this team, and it goes beyond what they do on the court. One fan came to the victory parade to take pictures for his daughter, and he was quoted as saying: "We come to as many games as we can because they are truly amazing. They're great role models." They're great role models.

And that's true in the classroom. I want to congratulate all three seniors on earning not just another title, but earning their college degrees as well. It is true overseas, where a lot of these folks played on Team U.S.A., whether it's Geno and the six UConn Huskies who helped

bring home the Gold at the London Olympics or Breanna leading our under-19 team to a championship just a few days ago.

When they're not hitting the books or representing their country, they find time to get involved in the community. Last year, players visited the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for children with serious illnesses, joined the Walk for Autism. Geno just held his 11th annual charity golf tournament. And while you may be rivals with Baylor on the court, you joined together off the court to raise over $30,000 for the Kay Yow Cancer Fund.

And so that's why we're so happy to have you all back to the White House. These are just some incredible athletes. They've made their mark as one of the great sports dynasties of our time, but they're also just really outstanding young women. You couldn't be prouder of them. I know some parents may be here, and I know you could not be prouder of them. And I told them—and I always say this—as the father of two young, beautiful, athletic, and tall daughters—[*laughter*]—it just always puts a smile on my face whenever I see such class acts represent their school and their country so well.

So congratulations, UConn. Good luck as you get ready for the fall. I told them to take a little time off, but they said Coach won't let them. [*Laughter*] But I'm overruling him; take a weekend. [*Laughter*] Just relax a little bit.

So congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marciella Auriemma, mother of Luigi "Geno" Auriemma, head coach, University of Connecticut women's basketball team; and Heather Buck, center/forward, Caroline Doty, Kelly Faris, Bria Hartley, guards, and Breanna Stewart and Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis, forwards, University of Connecticut women's basketball team.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of B. Todd Jones as Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
July 31, 2013

Todd Jones is a tough and tested law enforcement professional with decades of experience, and his confirmation to lead the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is both welcome and long overdue. For nearly 7 years, Senate Republicans had refused to confirm an ATF Director, not because they thought the nominees weren't qualified, but because they put politics ahead of the agency's law enforcement mission.

I applaud Senator Reid, Senator Leahy, Senator Klobuchar, and the bipartisan group of Senators who broke through that gridlock to give Todd Jones the up-or-down vote he deserved. But while Todd's confirmation will help ATF apply the tools it needs to protect our communities from dangerous criminals and reduce gun violence, we can't stop there. I will continue to stand with the majority of Americans who support commonsense reforms to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals. And I will continue to do everything in my power to keep our children and our communities safe.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi of Yemen
August 1, 2013

President Obama. I want to welcome President Hadi to the White House. This visit, I think, reinforces the strong partnership and cooperation that's developed between the United States and the Government of Yemen.

President Hadi obviously faces enormous challenges, but because of his leadership, he's

been able to initiate a national dialogue that can potentially bring the parties all together in Yemen and produce a constitution and a transition to a fully democratic government that can serve the interests of the people.

So far, the work that this national dialogue has produced is historic for Yemen. It has been inclusive. It's included all parties, including those who traditionally have opposed a central government. It includes women. It includes young people. And this should all lead to elections next year. I want to congratulate President Hadi for the good work that he's done.

President Hadi also faces significant economic challenges. And during these discussions, we reaffirmed our commitment to work with others in the international community to support Yemen during this transition period as it makes the kinds of economic reforms that can produce jobs and growth and prosperity for the Yemeni people.

And finally, I thanked President Hadi and his Government for the strong cooperation that they've offered when it comes to counterterrorism. Because of some of the very effective military reforms that President Hadi initiated when he came into this office, what we've seen is Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula—or AQAP—moved back out of territories that it was controlling.

And President Hadi recognizes that these threats are not only transnational in nature, but also cause severe hardship and prevent the kind of prosperity for the people of Yemen themselves.

So I look forward to continuing to work with President Hadi and the people of Yemen for the benefit of both our countries. And I very much want to congratulate him on the strong start that he's made on the national dialogue. I think it can produce the kinds of opportunities for growth and prosperity, particularly for the very young population of Yemen that I know President Hadi cares so deeply about.

So thank you very much for the visit.

President Hadi. Thank you very much. I'm very happy to meet with Your Excellency President Obama here in the White House. And I consider our partnership as critical for both our countries.

Our work together insofar as countering terrorism is concerned and also against Al Qaida is expressive, first and foremost, of Yemeni interests, because as a result of the activities of Al Qaida, Yemen's development basically came to a halt whereby there is no tourism, and the oil companies—the oil-exploring companies had to leave the country as a result of the presence of Al Qaida. So our cooperation against those terrorist elements are actually serving the interests of Yemen.

I actually spoke with His Excellency President Obama about the future of Yemen and about the national dialogue that includes 565 delegates that come from all walks of life, including women, youth, political parties, and indeed rivals that used to fight one another whom nowadays are actually sitting at the same dialogue table connecting them. This is considered a new experience in the whole region.

Basically, in this national dialogue, we look forward to building a new constitution seeking good governance, partnership of all members of the society in the country, whereby we achieve security and democracy, good governance, building a new future for the country, justice, and the division of authority and wealth.

And this national dialogue actually proved that 75 percent of the population of Yemen are young: that is, less than 45 years of age. They're seeking the change: a dignified lifestyle, democracy that is justice, equality in the country.

We have confidence that our people have actually abandoned weapons, and this is considered a new phase in history in the region, in the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Hadi spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi of Yemen

August 1, 2013

In their meeting today at the White House, President Barack Obama and President Abdo Rabu Mansour Hadi of Yemen affirmed their desire to broaden and strengthen the U.S.-Yemen relationship. President Obama reiterated the United States' support for the stability, security, prosperity, and unity of Yemen. He also commended the Yemeni government and people for their commitment to an inclusive democratic transition and the progress they have made thus far. President Hadi thanked President Obama for the United States' steadfast support to Yemen during this critical moment in its history. He also commended the President's efforts to advance peace, security, and opportunity in the Middle East. The two Presidents pledged to continue working together to help the Yemeni people realize their aspirations for strengthened governance, security, and the rule of law; protection of universal human rights; and enhanced economic opportunity. Presidents Obama and Hadi reaffirmed their commitment to a strong and enduring counterterrorism and security partnership and agreed to cooperate closely to enable the return of Yemeni detainees at Guantanamo Bay who have been designated for transfer.

Political Transition

Presidents Obama and Hadi discussed Yemen's efforts to implement the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and the strong support of the international community for its timely completion. President Hadi recounted Yemen's progress restructuring the military and undertaking a comprehensive National Dialogue, and affirmed that preparations for a new voter registry, constitutional referendum, and national elections were progressing. President Obama commended the inclusive and representative nature of Yemen's ongoing National Dialogue and the efforts underway to develop a shared vision for the country's future. He praised the vital role that women, youth, and civil society are playing in Yemen's political transition, providing a powerful example to the region.

Economic and Social Development

President Hadi highlighted the importance of social development and economic reform for Yemen's political transition, as well as the country's overall stability, security, and prosperity. The two Presidents agreed to continue working together to expand economic opportunities and foster private sector development in Yemen. President Hadi noted his productive discussions with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank regarding how to advance Yemen's economic reform agenda while protecting Yemen's most vulnerable, and President Obama expressed U.S. support for these reform efforts. The Presidents urged donors to continue supporting Yemen as it addresses a serious humanitarian crisis and begins fulfilling its commitments to responsible governance and reform. President Hadi thanked President Obama for unprecedented levels of U.S. humanitarian and development assistance.

Security and Counterterrorism

Presidents Obama and Hadi reaffirmed their commitment to a strong counterterrorism partnership, discussing a range of efforts to counter the threat to both countries posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). They recognized the extraordinary sacrifices of Yemeni military and security personnel killed in the fight against terrorism. They affirmed the importance of combating terrorism within the framework of the rule of law and of supporting Yemen's efforts to build capable, effective, and professional security forces.

Guantanamo Bay Detainees

President Obama reaffirmed his commitment to closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. He noted his decision to lift the moratorium on detainee transfers to Yemen, and the two Presidents agreed their governments would work together to facilitate the repatriation of Yemeni detainees who have been designated for transfer. President Hadi affirmed his intention to establish an extremist rehabilitation program to address the problem of violent extremism within Yemen, which could also facilitate the transfer of Yemeni detainees held at Guantanamo. Presidents Obama and Hadi agreed to remain in close consultation on this critical matter.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Samantha Power as United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations
August 1, 2013

I'm pleased that the Senate has confirmed Samantha Power as our next U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations by a strong bipartisan majority. As one of our country's leading foreign policy thinkers, Samantha knows that our Nation's interests are advanced with strong and principled American leadership. As a longtime champion of human rights and dignity, she will be a fierce advocate for universal rights, fundamental freedoms, and U.S. national interests. I'm grateful that Samantha will continue to be a vital member of my national security team, and I know that under her leadership, our U.N. Mission in New York will continue to represent American diplomacy at its best.

The President's Weekly Address
August 3, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, I went down to an Amazon warehouse in Tennessee to talk more about what we need to do to secure a better bargain for the middle class, to make sure that anyone who works hard can get ahead in the 21st-century economy.

Over the past 4½ years, we've fought our way back from the worst recession of our lifetimes and begun to lay a foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. Today, our businesses have created 7.3 million new jobs over the last 41 months. We now sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years, and our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years.

But as any middle class family will tell you, we're not where we need to be yet. Even before this crisis hit, we were living through a decade where a few at the top were doing better and better, while most families were working harder and harder just to get by.

Reversing this trend must be Washington's highest priority. It sure is mine. But too often over the past 2 years, Washington has taken its eye off the ball. They've allowed an endless parade of political posturing and phony scandals to distract from growing our economy and strengthening the middle class.

That's why I'm laying out my ideas for how we can build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America: a good education; a home of your own; health care when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; and the most important cornerstone of all, a good job in a durable, growing industry.

When it comes to creating more good jobs that pay decent wages, the problem is not a lack of ideas. Plenty of independent economists, business owners, and people from both

parties agree on what we have to do. I proposed many of these ideas 2 years ago in the "American Jobs Act." And this week, I put forward commonsense proposals for how we can create more jobs in manufacturing; in wind, solar, and natural gas; and by rebuilding America's infrastructure.

What we're lacking is action from Washington. And that's why, in addition to proposing ideas that we know will grow our economy, I also put forward a strategy for breaking through the Washington logjam: a grand bargain for the middle class.

I'm willing to work with Republicans to simplify our Tax Code for businesses large and small, but only if we take the money we save by transitioning to a simpler tax system and make a significant investment in creating good, middle class jobs. We can put construction workers back on the job rebuilding our infrastructure. We can boost manufacturing so more American companies can sell their products around the world. And we can help our community colleges arm our workers with the skills they need in a global economy, all without adding a dime to the deficit.

I'll keep laying out my ideas to give the middle class a better shot in the 21st century, and I'll keep reaching out to Republicans for theirs. But gutting critical investments in our future and threatening a national default on the bills that Congress has already racked up, that's not an economic plan. Denying health care to millions of Americans or shutting down the Government just because I'm for keeping it open, that won't help the middle class.

The truth is, there are no gimmicks when it comes to creating jobs. There are no tricks to grow the economy. Reversing the long erosion of middle class security in this country won't be easy. But if we work together and take a few bold steps, and if Washington is willing to set aside politics and focus on what really matters, we can grow our economy and give the middle class a better bargain. And together, we can make this country a place where everyone who works hard can get ahead.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:05 p.m. on August 2 in the Grand Foyer at the White House for broadcast on August 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 2, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 3.

Remarks at Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, Arizona
August 6, 2013

The President. Hey! Hello, Phoenix! Hello, Arizona! It is——

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. It is good to be here.

I want to say thank you to the Thunder for hosting us here today. Well, we are so glad to be here. I want you to give it up for somebody who's been fighting for homeowners and working families every single day, who's with me today: Secretary Shaun Donovan, Secretary of HUD. There he is right there. Give him a big round of applause. We've got Congressman Ed Pastor who's here as well. We've got your mayor, Greg Stanton, here. Doing an outstanding job. And to all the mayors and State legislators and tribal leaders who are here today, thank you.

Give Jorge a big round of applause for his introduction. To your superintendent, Dr. Kenneth Baca; your principal, Dr. Anna Battle. And I appreciate everybody at Desert Vista for having me here today. It is good to see the students are pretty enthusiastic about being back in school. [*Laughter*] I'm not sure I would have been that enthusiastic starting on the 6th. [*Laughter*] And I know this isn't your typical school—second day of school. So I want to give a special shout-out to the new seniors, class of 2014. You are aware that you're not finished yet, so—[*laughter*]. I—senior year, that's sometimes tempting. I want you all to stay focused.

Over the past couple weeks, I have been——

Audience member. Happy birthday, Mr. President!

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. It's—[*applause*]. It was my birthday 2 days ago. [*Laughter*] Got some singers here.

[*At this point, audience members sang "Happy Birthday to You" to the President.*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I am now 52, and Michelle says that I don't look a day over 51. [*Laughter*]

So over the last few weeks, I've been visiting towns all across the country, talking about what we need to do to secure a better bargain for the middle class: a national strategy to make sure that everybody who works hard has a chance to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

And I think people in Arizona especially understand the challenges that are out there, because for the past 4½ years, together, we've fought our way back from a devastating recession that cost millions of jobs for Americans. A lot of folks lost their homes; a lot of folks lost their savings. And what the recession showed was the long erosion of middle class security that had been taking place for decades.

But we fought back. We took on a broken health care system. We took on a housing market that was in free fall. We invested in new technologies to reverse our addiction to foreign oil. We changed a Tax Code that had become tilted a little bit too much in favor of the wealthiest Americans at the expense of working families. We saved the auto industry. We've now got GM that plans to hire a thousand new workers right next door in Chandler to make sure we're building some of the best cars in the world right here in the United States of America.

Our businesses have created 7.3 million new jobs over the past 41 months. We now sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. Our exports are way up. We produce more renewable energy than ever before, more natural gas than anybody else. Health care costs have been growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. And our deficits are coming down at the fastest rate in 60 years. So we're making progress.

So thanks to the efforts of a lot of people like you, we've cleared away the rubble of the financial crisis. We're starting to lay the foundation for more stable, more durable economic growth. But as any middle class family will tell you, we're not yet where we need to be. Because even before the crisis hit, we had lived through a decade where a few at the top were doing better and better, but most families were working harder and harder just to get by.

And reversing this trend should be—must be—Washington's highest priority. It's my highest priority. I want to make sure that in America, it doesn't matter what you look like, where you come from, who you love; you should be able to make it when you try. [*Applause*] You should be able to make it.

Now, unfortunately, for the last year or so, we've had an endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals that shift focus away from what do we need to do to shore up middle class families and create ladders of opportunity for folks to get into the middle class. And as Washington heads towards another budget debate, the stakes could not be higher.

And that's why I'm traveling around, laying out my ideas for how we have to build the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class: a good job with good wages; a home to call your own; a good education; affordable health care that's there for you when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; the opportunity—the ladders of opportunity—for people to earn their way into the middle class, to work their way out of poverty. Those are the elements that I think all of us believe in, but right now we're not delivering as much as we should on those promises.

Now, last Tuesday, I went to Tennessee to talk about the first cornerstone, which is how do we make sure that we're creating good middle class jobs here in the United States of America. Today I've come to Phoenix to talk about the second component, which is the most tangible cornerstone that lies at the heart of the American Dream, at the heart of middle

class life, and that's the chance to own your own home. The chance to own your own home.

We've got a lot of young people here who are thinking about college, they're going to get a higher education, they're going to find a job, they're going to find somebody they love, they're going to want to own a home. And the reason they will is because a home is the ultimate evidence that here in America, hard work pays off, that responsibility is rewarded.

I think about my grandparents' generation. When my grandfather served in World War II, he fought in Patton's army. When he got back, this country gave him a chance to go to college on the GI bill, but it also gave him the chance to buy his first home with a loan from the FHA. To him and to generations of Americans before and since, a home was more than just a house. It was a source of pride and a source of security. It was a place to raise kids, to put down roots; a place to—where you could build up savings for college or to start a business or to retire with some security.

And buying a home required responsibility on everybody's part. You had to save up to buy a home. And then banks were supposed to give you a fair deal, with terms you could understand, and buyers were supposed to live within their means and make sure that they could make their payments. So in that earlier generation, houses weren't for flipping around—it wasn't for speculation—houses were to live in and to build a life with.

And unfortunately, over time, responsibility too often gave way to recklessness. You had reckless lenders who sold loans to people they knew couldn't afford them. And let's face it, we also had some reckless buyers who knew they couldn't afford them and still took out loans. And all this created a housing bubble. And especially in some places like Arizona, it was devastating when that bubble finally burst, triggered a recession. Millions of Americans who had done everything right were hurt badly by the actions of other people. Housing prices plummeted.

By the time I took office, home values had fallen almost 20 percent from the year before. New housing starts had fallen nearly 80 percent from their peak. Hundreds of thousands of construction workers had lost their jobs. A record number of people were behind on their mortgage payments. And a lot of people here in Phoenix, they saw that devastation. This was part of ground zero for the housing bubble bursting.

So, less than a month after I took office, I came here to Arizona, and I laid out steps to stabilize the housing market and help responsible homeowners get back on their feet. And the truth is, it's been a long, slow process. The housing market's so big that it was going to take some time to heal when it got hurt that badly. It's taken longer than any of us would like. But during that time, we helped millions of Americans save an average of $3,000 each year by refinancing at lower rates. We helped millions of responsible homeowners stay in their homes, which was good for their neighbors because you don't want a bunch of foreclosure signs in your neighborhood.

Where Congress wouldn't act, we went ahead and acted, so over the past few years, we had the Department of Justice stand up for buyers who had been discriminated against or conned by predatory lending. And we won a settlement that gave more money to victims of discrimination in 1 year than in the previous 23 years combined.

We worked with States to force big banks to repay more than $50 billion to more than 1.5 million families: largest lending settlement in history. We extended the time that folks who had lost their jobs could delay their payment on their mortgages while they kept looking for work. We cracked down on the bad practices that led the crisis—led to the crisis in the first place. I mean, you had some loans back there in the bubble that were called "liar's loans." Now, something called a liar's loan, it's probably a bad idea. [*Laughter*]

So, because of all these actions we've been taking, our housing market is beginning to heal. Home prices are rising at the fastest pace in 7 years. Sales are up nearly 50 percent. Construction is up nearly 75 percent. New foreclosures are down by nearly two-thirds. Millions

of families have been able to come up for air; they're no longer underwater on their mortgages.

And just like the crisis hit Phoenix very hard, thanks to some great leadership here locally, Phoenix has also led one of the biggest comebacks in the country. So you should be proud of what you've done here. Home prices in Phoenix have risen by nearly 20 percent over the last year. New home sales are up by more than 25 percent.

This morning I—right before I came here, I visited Erickson Construction. [*Applause*] Hey! We've got some Erickson folks here. And they were explaining how, right when the bubble hit, Erickson shrunk—shrank to less than a hundred workers. Today, they're employing 580 people—and they're hiring even more people—because the housing market's bouncing back.

So that's one of the things about housing: It's not just important for the person who owns the house. Our economy is so impacted by everything that happens in housing. Consumers feel better when their home values are in a better place, so they're more willing to spend. A lot of people who want to start a business, their savings may be locked up in their house. Construction workers, contractors, suppliers, carpet makers—all these folks are impacted by the housing industry.

So we've made progress, and that's helped to move the economy forward. But we've got to build on this progress. We're not where we need to be yet. We've got to give more hard-working Americans the chance to buy their first home. We have to help more responsible homeowners refinance their mortgages, because a lot of them still have a spread between the rates they're paying right now on their mortgage and what they could be getting if they were able to refinance.

And we've got to turn the page on this kind of bubble-and-bust mentality that helped to create this mess in the first place. We've got to build a housing system that is durable and fair and rewards responsibility for generations to come. That's what we've got to do.

So I've already put forward a bunch of ideas that will help to accomplish that. And look, the fact of the matter is, Congress hasn't enacted all of them, so I'd like you to encourage Members of Congress to take some of these actions.

But like the other actions that we've taken, these will not help the neighbors down the street who bought a house that they couldn't afford and then walked away from it and left a foreclosed home behind. We don't want to help speculators who bought multiple homes just to make a quick buck.

What we want to do is put forward ideas that will help millions of responsible, middle class homeowners who still need relief. And we want to help hard-working Americans who dream of owning their own home fair and square, have a down payment, are willing to make those payments, understand that owning a home requires responsibility. And there are some immediate actions we could take right now that would help on that front, that would make a difference. So let me just list a couple of them.

Number one, Congress should pass a good, bipartisan idea to allow every homeowner the chance to save thousands of dollars a year by refinancing their mortgage at today's rates. We need to get that done. We've been talking about it for a year and a half, 2 years, 3 years. There's no reason not to do it.

Step number two, now that we've made it harder for reckless buyers to buy homes that they can't afford, let's make it a little bit easier for qualified buyers to buy the homes that they can afford. So Shaun Donovan has been working with the finance industry to make sure we're simplifying overlapping regulations; we're cutting redtape for responsible families who want to get a mortgage, but keep getting rejected by the banks. We need to give well-qualified Americans who lost their jobs during the crisis a fair chance to get a loan if they've worked hard to repair their credit.

And step three is something that you don't always hear about when it comes to the housing market, and that is fixing our broken immigration system. It would actually help our housing market. It's pretty simple: When more

people buy homes and play by the rules, home values go up for everybody. And according to one recent study, the average homeowner has already seen the value of their home boosted by thousands of dollars just because of immigration.

And the good news is, with the help of your Senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake, the Senate has already passed a bipartisan immigration bill. It's got the support of CEOs and labor and law enforcement. This could help homeownership here. So I want you to encourage Republicans in the House of Representatives to stop dragging their feet. Let's go ahead and get this done.

Step number four, we should address the uneven recovery by rebuilding the communities hit the hardest by the housing crisis, including many right here in Arizona. Let's put construction back—construction workers back to work repairing rundown homes, tearing down vacant properties, so that the value of homes in those surrounding areas start picking up. We can put people to work right now and improve the remaining housing stock that's out there. Places that are facing a longer road back from the crisis should have their country's help to get back on their feet.

Step five, we should make sure families that don't want to buy a home or can't yet afford to buy one still have a decent place to rent. We—it's important for us to encourage homeownership, but a lot of people rent and there's nothing wrong with renting. And we've got to make sure that we are creating affordable opportunities when it comes to rental properties.

In the runup to the crisis, banks and governments too often made everybody feel like they had to own a home, even if they weren't ready and didn't have the payments. That's a mistake we should not repeat. Instead, let's invest in affordable rental housing. Let's bring together cities and States to address local barriers that drive up rents for working families.

So if we help more Americans refinance their homes, if we help qualified families get a mortgage, we reform our immigration system, we rebuild the hardest hit communities, we make sure that folks have a decent place to rent if they're not yet able to buy, all these steps will give more middle class families the chance to either buy their own home now or eventually buy their own home. It's going to give more relief to responsible homeowners. It gives more options to families who aren't yet ready to buy. All that is going to improve the housing market and will improve the economy.

But—and this is the last key point I want to make—as home prices rise, we can't just reinflate another housing bubble. I mean, everybody—I hope everybody here in Arizona learned some hard lessons from what happened. Housing prices generally don't just keep on going up forever at the kind of pace it was going up. It was crazy. So what we want to do is something stable and steady. And that's why I want to lay a rock-solid foundation to make sure the kind of crisis we went through never happens again. [*Applause*] We've got to make sure it doesn't happen again.

And one of the key things to make sure it doesn't happen again is to wind down these companies that are not really Government, but not really private sector; they're known as Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. For too long, these companies were allowed to make huge profits buying mortgages, knowing that if their bets went bad, taxpayers would be left holding the bag. It was heads we win, tails you lose. And it was wrong. And along with what happened on Wall Street, it helped to inflate this bubble in a way that ultimately killed Main Street.

So the good news is, right now there's a bipartisan group of Senators working to end Fannie and Freddie as we know them. And I support these kinds of reform efforts. And they're following four core principles for what I believe this reform should look like.

First, private capital should take a bigger role in the mortgage market. I know that sounds confusing to folks who call me a socialist; I think I saw some posters there on the way in. [*Laughter*] But I actually believe in the free market. And just like the health care law that we put in place, Obamacare—which, by the way, if you don't have health insurance or you're buying it at exorbitant rates on the indi-

vidual market, starting on October 1, you can join a marketplace and be part of a pool that gives you much lower premiums, saves you a lot of money.

But in the same way that what we did with health care was to set up clear rules for insurance companies to protect consumers, make it more affordable, but still built on the private marketplace, I believe that our housing system should operate where there's a limited government role and private lending should be the backbone of the housing market. And that includes, by the way, community-based lenders who view their borrowers not just as a number, but as a neighbor. So that's one principle.

A second principle is, we can't leave taxpayers on the hook for irresponsibility or bad decisions by some of these lenders or Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. We've got to encourage the pursuit of profit, but the era of expectinga bailout after you pursue your profit and you don't manage your risk well, well, that puts the whole country at risk. And we're ending those days. We're not going to do that anymore.

Third principle is, we should preserve access to safe and simple mortgage products like the 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage. That's something families should be able to rely on when they're making the most important purchase of their lives.

Number four, we've got to keep housing affordable for first-time buyers, like all these young people. When they're ready to buy a house, we've got to make sure it's affordable. Families who are working to climb their way into the middle class, we've got to do what we can to make housing affordable. And that means we've got to strengthen the FHA so it gives today's families the same kind of chance it gave my grandparents to buy a home, and it preserves those rungs on the ladder of opportunity.

And we've got to support, as I said, affordable rental housing. And by the way, we've also got to keep up our fight against homelessness. The mayor of Phoenix has been doing a great job here in Phoenix on that front. We've got to continue to improve it.

Since I took office, we helped bring one in four homeless veterans off the streets. We should be proud of that. Here in Phoenix, thanks to the hard work of everyone from Mayor Stanton to the local United Way, to US Airways, you're on track to end chronic homelessness for veterans, period, by 2014.

But we've got to keep going, because nobody in America—and certainly no veteran—should be left to live on the streets.

So here's the bottom line: put all these principles together, that's going to protect our entire economy, and it will improve the housing market not just here in Phoenix, but throughout the State and throughout the country.

We're also going to need to make sure, though, that we're protecting individual homeowners. We've got to give them the tools that they can protect themselves. So we've got a Consumer Finance Protection Bureau that we created. And it's laying down new rules of the road that everybody can count on when they're shopping for a mortgage. They're designing a new, simple mortgage form that will be in plain English so you can actually read it without a lawyer; although, you may still want a lawyer. Obviously, I'm not saying you don't; I'm just saying you'll be able to read it. [*Laughter*] There won't be a lot of fine print. That way you know before you owe. [*Laughter*]

And the Senate finally confirmed Richard Cordray as the head of this—head watchdog for the CFPB. So he's out there aggressively protecting consumers and homeowners.

Now, when it comes to some of the other leaders we need to look out for the American people, the Senate still has a job to do. Months ago, I nominated a man named Mel Watt to be our Nation's top housing regulator. He is an outstanding Member of Congress. And during that time, he was on the Housing Committee, worked with banks, worked with borrowers to protect consumers, to help responsible lenders provide credit. He is the right person for the job. Congress and the Senate should give his nomination an up-or-down vote without any more obstruction or delay. We don't have time for those kinds of games.

So I want to be honest with you: No program or policy is going to solve all the problems in a multitrillion-dollar housing market. The housing bubble went up so high that the heights it reached before it burst were so unsustainable, that we knew it was going to take some time for us to fully recover. But if we take the steps that I talked about today, then I know we will restore not just our home values, but also our common values. We'll make owning a home a symbol of responsibility, not speculation, a source of security for generations to come, just like it was for my grandparents. I want it to be just like that for all the young people who are here today and their children and their grandchildren.

And if we stay focused on middle class security and opportunities to get into the middle class, if we take the strategy that I'm laying out for the entire economy—for jobs and housing and education, health care, retirement, creating ladders of opportunity—then we will secure that better bargain for all Americans, where hard work is once again rewarded with a shot at a middle class life, which means more Americans will know the pride of that first paycheck. More Americans will know the satisfaction of flipping the sign to "Open" on their own business. More Americans will know the joy of scratching the child's height on the door of their new home, with pencil, of course. [*Laughter*]

We can do all this if we work together. And it won't be easy. But if we take just a few bold steps, and if Washington will just end the gridlock, set aside the slash-and-burn partisanship, actually try to solve problems instead of scoring political points, our economy will grow stronger a year from now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now.

And as long as I've got the privilege to serve as your President, that's what I'm going to be fighting for.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jorge Ruiz, senior sales representative, Simpson Strong-Tie Company Inc.

Interview With Jay Leno of NBC's "The Tonight Show" in Burbank, California

August 6, 2013

Mr. Leno. Please welcome my first guest—actually, my only guest—the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Leno. Welcome back, sir.

The President. Thank you. It's good to be back.

Mr. Leno. Well, we're thrilled to have you.

The President. It is good to be back.

Mr. Leno. And a happy birthday.

The President. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leno. Happy birthday to you.

The President. Thank you.

The President's Birthday

Mr. Leno. So how did you celebrate Sunday? What did you do?

The President. Ah, had a bunch of friends come over who I don't see that often from high school and college. And we played a little golf, and then we tried to play a little basketball. And it was a sad state of affairs. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Really?

The President. Yes. A bunch of old guys, and afterwards, "Where's the ibuprofen?" and all that stuff. [*Laughter*] Yes.

Mr. Leno. But you're pretty competitive.

The President. I am pretty competitive. But the day of my birthday—we do departure photos of people who are transitioning out of the White House. And we let them bring their families in, they take a picture in the Oval Office. And this wonderful staff person came in, had a really cute, young son. He looked like Harry Potter, a 6-year-old guy. [*Laughter*] He

came in, he had an economic report for me. He had graphs and everything. [*Laughter*] He says, "My birthday is in August too." I said, "Well, how old are you going to be?" He said, "Seven." He said, "How old are you?" I said, "Fifty-two." He said, "Whoa." [*Laughter*].

Mr. Leno. Whoa.

The President. Whoa.

Mr. Leno. Whoa.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*] He was trying—he looked off in the distance. He was trying to project. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Yes, you can't even——

The President. What does that—you can't even—you can't go out that far.

Mr. Leno. You can't grasp that number, no.

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Now, I've seen Michelle tease you about your gray hair. You have a bit of silver in your hair. Do you tease back?

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. No? See—yes.

The President. No. That's why we're celebrating our 21st anniversary. [*Laughter*]

Terrorism/Diplomatic Security

Mr. Leno. Yes, that's right. As I'm married 33 years, I know exactly what you're saying. [*Laughter*].

Hey, I've got to ask you about this. Everyone is concerned about these Embassy closings. How significant is this threat?

The President. Well, it's significant enough that we're taking every precaution. We had already done a lot to bolster Embassy security around the world, but especially in the Middle East, North Africa, where the threats tend to be highest. And whenever we see a threat stream that we think is specific enough that we can take some specific precautions within a certain timeframe, then we do so.

Now, it's a reminder that for all the progress we've made—getting bin Laden, putting Al Qaida between Afghanistan and Pakistan back on its heels—that this radical, violent extremism is still out there. And we've got to stay on top of it. It's also a reminder of how courageous our Embassy personnel tend to be, because you can never have a hundred-percent security in some of these places.

Mr. Leno. Sure.

The President. The countries themselves sometimes are ill-equipped to provide the kind of security that you want. Even if we reinforce it, there are still vulnerabilities.

And these diplomats, they go out there and they serve every day. Oftentimes, they have their families with them. They do an incredible job and sometimes don't get enough credit. So we're grateful to them, and we've got to do everything we can to protect them.

Terrorism/State Department Advisory on Travel Abroad

Mr. Leno. Now, this—yes—[*applause*]—this global travel warning, this is for Americans all around the world? Are we telling people don't take that European vacation just yet?

The President. No, no, no, no.

Mr. Leno. What are we saying?

The President. No, I think the general rule is just show some common sense and some caution. So there are some countries where you're less likely to experience a terrorist attack. There are some where there are more dangers. And if people are paying attention, checking with the State Department or Embassy, going on the website before you travel, find out what kind of precautions you should be taking, then I think it still makes sense for people to take vacations. They just have to make sure that they're doing so in a prudent way.

Terrorism

Mr. Leno. What do you say to those cynics who go, "Oh, this is an overreaction to Benghazi"? How do you respond to that?

The President. One thing I've tried to do as President is not overreact, but make sure that as much as possible the American people understand that there are genuine risks out there. What's great about what we've seen with America over the last several years is how resilient we are. So after the Boston bombing, for example, the next day folks were out there, they're going to ball games. They are making

sure that we're not reacting in a way that somehow shuts us down.

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. And that's the right reaction. Terrorists depend on the idea that we're going to be terrorized. And we're going to live our lives. And the odds of people dying in a terrorist attack obviously are still a lot lower than in a car accident, unfortunately.

Mr. Leno. Sure.

The President. But there are things that we can do to make sure that we're keeping the pressure on these networks that would try to injure Americans. And the first thing I think about when I wake up and the last thing I think about when I go to bed is making sure that I'm doing everything I can to keep Americans safe.

Terrorism/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Mr. Leno. Safe to say that we learned about these threats through the NSA intelligence program? Is that a fair assessment?

The President. Well, this intelligence gathering that we do is a critical component of counterterrorism. And obviously, with Mr. Snowden and the disclosures of classified information, it's raised a lot of questions for people. But what I said as soon as it happened I continue to believe in, which is, a lot of these programs were put in place before I came in. I had some skepticism, and I think there's—we should have a healthy skepticism about what Government's doing. I had the programs reviewed. We put in some additional safeguards to make sure that there's Federal court oversight as well as congressional oversight, that there is no spying on Americans.

We don't have a domestic spying program. What we do have are some mechanisms where we can track a phone number——

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. ——or an e-mail address that we know is connected to some sort of terrorist threat. And that information is useful. But what I've said before I want to make sure I repeat, and that is, we should be skeptical about the potential encroachments on privacy. None of the revelations show that Government has actually abused these powers, but they're pretty significant powers.

And I'm—I've been talking to Congress and civil libertarians and others about are there additional ways that we can make sure that people know nobody is listening to your phone call, but we do want to make sure that after a Boston bombing, for example, we've got the phone numbers of those two brothers——

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. ——we want to be able to make sure did they call anybody else? Are there networks in New York, are there networks——

Mr. Leno. Sure.

The President. ——elsewhere that we have to roll up? And if we can make sure that there's confidence on the part of the American people that there's oversight, then I think we can make sure that we're properly balancing our liberty and our security.

Mr. Leno. When we come back, I want to ask you about Russia and Snowden. I hit on something in the monologue which just seems incredible to me, and I want to get your thoughts on that.

More with the President when we come back right after this.

[*At this point, there was a commercial break.*]

Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/Whistleblower Protections/Classified National Security Information

Mr. Leno. Welcome back to our—[*inaudible*]—with Barack Obama.

Let me ask you about this—the NSA leaker Edward Snowden. Some call him a whistleblower. What do you call him?

The President. Well, we don't know yet exactly what he did, other than what he's said on the Internet, and it's important for me not to prejudge something.

Mr. Leno. Got you.

The President. Hopefully, at some point he'll go to trial, and he will have a lawyer and due process, and we can make those decisions.

I can tell you that there are ways, if you think that the Government is abusing a program, of coming forward. In fact, I, through Executive order, signed whistleblower protection for intelligence officers or people who are involved in the intelligence industry. So you don't have to break the law. You don't have to divulge information——

Mr. Leno. Sure.

The President. ——that could compromise American security. You can come forward, come to the appropriate individuals, and say, look, I've got a problem with what's going on here, I'm not sure whether it's being done properly.

If in fact the allegations are true, then he didn't do that. And that is a huge problem because a lot of what we do depends on terrorist networks not knowing——

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. ——that, in fact, we may be able to access their information.

Mr. Leno. Let me ask—now, he was a contracted employee.

The President. Yes.

Government Contractors

Mr. Leno. And it seems the Government has a lot of these.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Leno. I remember when I was coming up, my brother was in ROTC, and in those days, they would take college students, you go into the Army, the Army would train you.

The President. Right.

Mr. Leno. This guy is being paid money by an outside firm, living in Hawaii, got the stripper girlfriend. All of a sudden you're all upset with what the Government is doing——

The President. Right.

Mr. Leno. ——and you go to another country. I mean, in my era, Daniel Ellsberg stood in the town square and said, "I've got this," got arrested. New York Times—I mean, should we go back to not using so many—whether it's Blackwater or any of these contract—these people who are Hessians, they get paid?

The President. Well, I think you're raising an important issue. We've been trying to reduce the reliance on contractors. Some of the contractors do a great job, and they're patriots and they're trying to support our mission. Sometimes they can do it more efficiently or effectively if they've got some specialized knowledge. But one of the things that I've asked our team to look at is, when it comes to intelligence, should we, in fact, be farming that much stuff out. And there are a lot of extraordinarily capable folks in our military, in our Government who can do this, and probably do it cheaper, and then benefit from the training that they get, so that when they transfer, they're in a better position.

Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/Russia-U.S. Relations

Mr. Leno. Now, were you surprised that Russia granted Snowden asylum?

The President. I was disappointed because even though we don't have an extradition treaty with them, traditionally we have tried to respect if there's a lawbreaker or an alleged lawbreaker in their country, we evaluate it and we try to work with them. They didn't do that with us. And in some ways, it's reflective of some underlying challenges that we've had with Russia lately.

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. A lot of what's been going on hasn't been major breaks in the relationship, and they still help us on supplying our troops in Afghanistan.

Mr. Leno. Sure.

The President. They're still helping us on counterterrorism work. They were helpful after the Boston bombing in that investigation. And so there's still a lot of business that we can do with them.

But there have been times where they slip back into cold war thinking——

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. ——and a cold war mentality. And what I consistently say to them, and what I say to President Putin, is, that's the past and we've got to think about the future, and there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to cooperate more effectively than we do.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia

Mr. Leno. And Putin seems to me like one of those old-school KGB guys.

The President. Well, he——

Mr. Leno. I mean——

The President. ——he headed up the KGB. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Yes. Well, that's what I mean. Yes, that's what I mean. He has that mentality.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Leno. I mean, look at this picture here. You two—[*laughter*]—you look like me and the NBC executives. What is going on there? [*Laughter*] That doesn't look like a friendly picture.

The President. Well, the truth is, is that when we have meetings we can have some pretty blunt exchanges and animated exchanges.

Mr. Leno. Sure.

The President. But he's got—that seems to be his preferred style during press conferences, is kind of sitting back and not looking too excited. [*Laughter*] Now, part of it is he's not accustomed to having press conferences where you've got a bunch of reporters yelling questions at you.

Group of Twenty (G–20) Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia

Mr. Leno. Now, the G–20 summit is in St. Petersburg next——

The President. Coming up, right.

Mr. Leno. Are you going to that, and will you meet with Putin?

The President. I will be going to that. I will be going to that because the G–20 summit is the main forum where we talk about the economy—the world economy—with all the top economic powers in the world. So it's not something unique to Russia. They're hosting it this year, but it's important for us, as the leading economy in the world, to make sure that we're there, in part because creating jobs, improving our economy, building up our manufacturing base, increasing wages—all those things now depend on how we compete in this global economy. And when you've got problems in Europe, or China is slowing down, that has an impact here in the United States.

And I've been saying for the entire tenure of my Presidency that my number-one priority at all times is, how do we create an economy where, if you work hard in this country, you can succeed? And there are a lot of things that we can do here in this country, but we've also got to pay attention to what's going on outside it.

Civil Rights/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons/2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia

Mr. Leno. Well, something that shocked me about Russia—and I'm surprised this is not a huge story—suddenly, homosexuality is against the law. I mean, this seems like Germany: Let's round up the Jews, let's round up the gays, let's round up the Blacks. I mean, it starts with that. You round up people who you don't—I mean, why is not more of the world outraged at this?

The President. Well, I've been very clear that when it comes to universal rights, when it comes to people's basic freedoms, that whether you are discriminating on the basis of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, you are violating the basic morality that I think should transcend every country. And I have no patience for countries that try to treat gays or lesbians or transgendered persons in ways that intimidate them or are harmful to them.

Now, what's happening in Russia is not unique. When I traveled to Africa, there were some countries that are doing a lot of good things for their people, who we're working with and helping on development issues, but in some cases have persecuted gays and lesbians. And it makes for some uncomfortable press conferences sometimes. But one of the things that I think is very important for me to speak out on is making sure that people are treated fairly and justly, because that's what we stand for. And I believe that that's a precept that's not unique to America, that's something that should apply everywhere.

Mr. Leno. Do you think it will affect the Olympics?

The President. I think Putin and Russia have a big stake in making sure the Olympics work, and I think they understand that for most of the countries that participate in the Olympics, we wouldn't tolerate gays and lesbians being treated differently. They're athletes, they're there to compete. And if Russia wants to uphold the Olympic spirit, then every judgment should be made on the track or in the swimming pool or on the balance beam, and people's sexual orientation shouldn't have anything to do with it.

Mr. Leno. Good enough for me.

We'll be right back. We'll talk about the economy when we come back.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Leno. More with President Obama right after this.

[*There was a commercial break.*]

National Economy

Mr. Leno. Welcome back. We're talking with the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

Hey, let's talk about the economy. Things seem to be getting better, seem to be improving.

The President. Well, the economy is growing.

Mr. Leno. Yes.

The President. The unemployment rate's been ticking down, and housing is improving. We've seen the deficit cut in half. Health care costs are actually going up slower than they have in—any time in the last 50 years. So there are a lot of good trends.

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. But I think what folks all across the country would tell you is we've got a lot more work to do. Wages and salaries haven't gone up. Middle class families are still struggling to make sure they can pay for their kids' college education. They're still concerned about whether they can retire.

And what Washington should be thinking about every single day is, how do we make sure we've got an economy where, if folks work hard, they can find a good job that pays a decent wage; they can send their kids to college; they got health care they can count on; they can retire even if they don't get rich—or even if they're not rich; and that we're creating these ladders of opportunities for people to get into the middle class.

And what's happened over the last 20 years is—actually longer than that, probably over the last 30—is that the gap between those of us at the very top and the vast middle has been growing wider and wider. And some of that's globalization. Some of it's technology. You go to a factory—you're a car guy—if you go to a auto plant now, robots, and it's clean as a whistle, and it doesn't employ as many people as it used to. So a lot of those middle class jobs have gone away.

And what we have to do is make sure that we are investing in infrastructure, research; making sure our kids are educated properly; and a housing—an improved and more stable housing market instead of the kind of bubbles that we had before. All those things can really make a difference.

Infrastructure/National Economy

Mr. Leno. You mentioned infrastructure. Why is that a partisan issue? I live in a town, the bridge is falling apart, it's not safe. How does that become Republican or Democrat? How do you not just fix the bridge? [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't know. As you know, for the last 3 years, I've said, let's work together. Let's find a financing mechanism, and let's go ahead and fix our bridges, fix our roads, sewer systems, our ports. You know, the Panama Canal is being widened so that these big supertankers can come in. Now, that will be finished in 2015. If we don't deepen our ports all along the Gulf—places like Charleston, South Carolina, or Savannah, Georgia, or Jacksonville, Florida—if we don't do that, those ships are going to go someplace else. And we'll lose jobs. Businesses won't locate here.

So this is something that traditionally has been bipartisan. I mean, it used to be Republicans and Democrats, they love cutting those ribbons.

Mr. Leno. Yes.

The President. And we've got a bunch of construction workers who aren't working right now. They've got the skills. They want to get on the job. It would have a huge impact on the economy not just now, but well into the future. So I'm just going to keep on pushing Republicans to join with us, and let's try to do it.

Part of it is—what they'll say is, we like infrastructure, but we don't want to pay for it. And one of the things I've been trying to get across here is, is that we don't need a huge Government, but we need Government doing some basic things, and we should all agree on a sensible mechanism to go ahead and pay for it—make sure we don't waste money, make sure we're cutting down on permitting times and delays, but let's go ahead and get it done.

Mr. Leno. Would it be possible to do a modern WPA, almost like a America Peace Corps, where kids get paid a decent wage, you give them food, and they fix up Detroit, they fix up other cities—whatever—they fix bridges? I mean, when you travel this country, you see these great bridges and things that were built by—and they have the plaque, the guys that built it in 1932, in 1931.

The President. And it was incredibly important for not just the economy in the thirties, we use it still—Golden Gate Bridge, Hoover Dam. It opened up opportunity for everybody. The Interstate Highway System—think of all the businesses that got created because we put that together.

So it's possible. The question is, do we have the political will to do it? And my argument to Congress has been, this is just like your house. You can put off fixing the roof. You can put off doing the tuck-pointing. You can put off replacing the old boiler. But sooner or later, you're going to have to fix it, and it's going to be more expensive the longer you put it off. When we've got unemployed folks right now, we should be putting them to work, and it would be good for the entire country.

Senator John S. McCain III/Bipartisanship

Mr. Leno. And let me ask you about something I'm seeing. Is it me, or do I see kind of bromance with you and John McCain? [*Laughter*] I remember you two had that lovers' quarrel for a while. And, oh, now, you're all—well, you're best friends.

The President. Well, you know that's how——

Mr. Leno. What happened?

The President. That's how a classic romantic comedy goes, right? [*Laughter*] Initially, you're not getting along, and then you keep on bumping into each other. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Yes, but what's—I mean, what changed? Who saw the light? [*Laughter*]

The President. No, you know, John McCain and I have a number of philosophical differences, but he is a person of integrity. He is willing to say things regardless of the politics. The fact that he worked hard with a group of Democratic and Republican Senators on immigration reform; they passed a bill in the Senate that will make sure that folks who are here illegally have to pay back taxes and have to make—and pay a penalty and get to the back of the line, but over time have a pathway to citizenship, and make sure that we're strengthening our borders; he went ahead and passed that even though there are some questions in his own party. So I think that he deserves credit for being somebody who is willing to go against the grain of his own party sometimes. It's probably not good for me to compliment him on television. But——

Mr. Leno. Yes, yes. [*Laughter*] Get a big head.

The President. But I think that he's an example of a number of Republicans in the Senate, in the House who want to be for something, not just be against everything. And the more that they can try to move in that direction, I think the better off we'll be.

Mr. Leno. Now, we're going to take a break. I want to talk about Hillary because I know you had lunch with her.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Leno. My question when we come back: Who asked who to lunch? [*Laughter*] Don't answer. Don't answer. We'll find out more with President Obama right after this.

[*There was a commercial break.*]

Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Mr. Leno. We are back with the President of the United States.

You and Hillary had lunch last—who invited who to lunch? I'm curious.

The President. I invited her.

Mr. Leno. Okay.

The President. And we had a great time. She had that post-administration glow. [*Laughter*] You know, when folks leave the White House, like 2 weeks later, they look great. [*Laughter*] But it was a wonderful conversation. By the end of my first term, we had become genuinely close, and I could not have more respect for her. She was a great Secretary of State, and I'm very, very proud of the work she did.

Mr. Leno. Did you notice her measuring the drapes or anything like that? [*Laughter*]

The President. No. Keep in mind, she's been there before. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Right, that's true. That's true.

The President. So she doesn't have to measure them. Yes.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Leno. So what's the latest in health care? What's new?

The President. Well, on October 1, people are going to be able to sign up if they don't have health care. If you've got health care, you don't have to do anything. The only thing that's happened for people who have health care right now is, is that you've been able to benefit from the fact that we put in place a law so that insurance companies have to spend 80 percent of your premiums on health care, and if they spend it on administrative costs and high CEO salaries, they got to send you a rebate. And that's been affecting people.

If you've got a kid who has just graduated, doesn't have a job with health care, they can stay on their parent's plan. That's in place right now. Free preventive care and free contraceptive care for young women and families—all that stuff's in place now. No lifetime limits.

So a lot of consumer protections got put in place. But on October 1, if you don't have health care right now, you can join what are called these marketplaces, and you'll be able to get lower cost health care. Here in California, it's estimated it will be 20-, 30-percent cheaper than what you're already getting. And we'll give you subsidies—tax credits, essentially—if you still can't afford it.

So you can go to healthcare.gov, and right now you can preregister essentially and start figuring out is this plan right for you.

Mr. Leno. Well, I was able to get health care from—the guys who worked at my shop for me are all over 50. They never had health care. And I was able to get it now because you can't be turned down. So thank you for that.

The President. You can't be turned down because of a preexisting condition. That's part of what we're going to be doing.

Shooting Death of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida/Civil Rights

Mr. Leno. Hey, something I thought was—I thought you spoke very eloquently about the Trayvon Martin case, and I could tell you were speaking from the heart. And tell me about that.

The President. Well, I think all of us were troubled by what happened. And any of us who were parents can imagine the heartache that those parents went through. It doesn't mean that Trayvon was a perfect kid—none of us were. We were talking offstage—when you're a teenager, especially a teenage boy, you're going to mess up, and you won't always have the best judgment. But what I think all of us agree to is, is that we should have a criminal justice system that's fair, that's just. And what I wanted to try to explain was why this was a particularly sensitive topic for African American families, because a lot of people who have sons know the experience they had of being followed or being viewed suspiciously.

We all know that young African American men disproportionately have involvement in criminal activities and violence—for a lot of reasons, a lot of it having to do with poverty, a lot of it having to do with disruptions in their

neighborhoods and their communities, failing schools, and all those things. And that's no excuse, but what we also believe in is, is that people—everybody—should be treated fairly and the system should work for everyone. And so what I'm trying to do is just——

Mr. Leno. I agree.

The President. ——make sure that we have a conversation and that we're all asking ourselves are there some things that we can do to foster better understanding, and to make sure that we don't have laws in place that encourage the kind of violent encounter that we saw there that resulted in tragedy.

The President's Favorite Food

Mr. Leno. Let me ask you something. You told a group of young people that broccoli was your favorite food. [*Laughter*] Now, lying to voters is one thing; lying to children, that's—[*laughter*]—that is——

The President. Now, let me say this——

Mr. Leno. Can you put your right hand on a Bible and say, "Broccoli"? [*Laughter*]

The President. Let me say this: I have broccoli a lot. [*Laughter*] I mean, no——

Mr. Leno. Really?

The President. ——you can ask my staff. It is one of my staples. Me and broccoli, I don't know, we've got a thing going. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Really? So——

The President. It goes especially well with burgers and fries.

Mr. Leno. Right, right. [*Laughter*]

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Leno. And did Michelle make a broccoli cake with the broccoli icing?

The President. Well, I won't go that far.

Mr. Leno. Now, did the kids believe you, or did they go, "Oh, come on"?

The President. No, they did kind of—they looked at me. [*Laughter*] They had their little pads and pencils, and they were all, "Really?" [*Laughter*] "More than chips?" [*Laughter*]

But to Michelle's credit——

Mr. Leno. Yes.

The President. ——the "Let's Move!" initiative that she's been involved with that has gotten so many folks all around the country doing stuff to help kids exercise and eat right, for the first time in a long time, we've started to see some modest reduction in childhood obesity.

Mr. Leno. Well, that's good.

The President. So I think it's making a difference.

Mr. Leno. That's good.

The President. Really proud of it.

Mr. Leno. Mr. President, it's been an honor. I know you have to go.

The President. It was nice to see you.

Mr. Leno. Thank you so much.

The President. Before we go, well, Jay, I know you're very proud of your car collection.

Mr. Leno. Yes.

The President. Well, there's one piece that's missing.

Mr. Leno. Cool.

The President. This is the Beast.

[*The President presented Mr. Leno with a scale model of his limousine.*]

Mr. Leno. The Beast!

The President. The one I drive in.

Mr. Leno. Oh, look at that. My friend, Ed Welburn, designed that car.

The President. So——

Mr. Leno. Will you sign the roof?

The President. I will sign the roof.

Mr. Leno. Oh, cool. [*Laughter*]

The President. Now, the doors are heavy, so when you're getting in——

Mr. Leno. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

The President. ——you may need a little help. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. I assume the real car will be at my garage after the show tonight. [*Laughter*]

[*The President signed the roof of the model.*]

The President. There you go, Jay.

Mr. Leno. Very good.

The President. Thank you so much.

Mr. Leno. Mr. President, a pleasure and an honor, sir.

The President. I appreciate it.

Mr. Leno. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:34 p.m. at NBC Studios. In his remarks, he referred to suspected April 15 Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; and Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, parents of Trayvon Martin.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Prohibiting Certain Imports of Burmese Jadeite and Rubies

August 6, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA) and the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–286) (the "JADE Act") that takes additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, as modified in scope in Executive Order 13448 of October 18, 2007, and Executive Order 13619 of July 11, 2012, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310 of July 28, 2003, Executive Order 13448 of October 18, 2007, Executive Order 13464 of April 30, 2008, and Executive Order 13619 of July 11, 2012.

In Executive Order 13047, the President found that the Government of Burma committed large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in Burma after September 30, 1996, and further determined that the actions and policies of the Government of Burma constituted an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States and declared a national emergency to deal with that threat. To address that threat and to implement section 570 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Appropriations Act, 1997 (Public Law 104–208), the President in Executive Order 13047 prohibited new investment in Burma by United States persons. On July 28, 2003, the President issued Executive Order 13310, which contained prohibitions implementing certain provisions of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–61) and blocked the property and interests in property of persons listed in the Annex to Executive Order 13310 or determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to meet designation criteria specified in Executive Order 13310. In Executive Order 13448, the President expanded the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047, incorporated existing designation criteria set forth in Executive Order 13310, blocked the property and interests in property of persons listed in the Annex to Executive Order 13448, and provided additional criteria for designations of other persons. In Executive Order 13464, the President blocked the property and interests in property of persons listed in the Annex to Executive Order 13464 and provided additional criteria for designations of other persons. In Executive Order 13619, I modified the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 and provided additional designation criteria.

The order that I have just issued prohibits the importation into the United States of any jadeite or rubies mined or extracted from Burma and any articles of jewelry containing jadeite or rubies mined or extracted from Burma. The order amends Executive Order 13310 to revoke the section of that order imposing a prohibition on the importation into the United States of any article that is a product of Burma and a related section. The order waives the sanctions described in section 5(b) of the JADE Act. Except as authorized or exempt, transactions with persons included on the Department of the Treasury's List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons continue to be prohibited pursuant to IEEPA.

The order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of

State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order.

All agencies of the United States Government are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 7 and referred to Executive Order 13651, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Virtual Town Hall Meeting on Housing in Los Angeles, California
August 7, 2013

Zillow, Inc., Chief Executive Officer Spencer M. Rascoff. Welcome, and thank you for joining us today. Zillow is honored to host this unprecedented event and connect homeowners, renters, and prospective buyers with President Obama, who's ready to answer your housing questions.

The housing market has come a long way in the last year, and we're all very happy to see most local markets bouncing back after the housing recession, with many homeowners free from negative equity and sellers enjoying a competitive environment. Still, there are concerns about the future. And we've received thousands of questions over the last couple of days via social media. Today we'll pose some of these questions—your questions—to the President.

I'm honored to welcome President Barack Obama. Mr. President.

The President. Great to see you.

Mr. Rascoff. Thank you.

The President. Thank you so much.

Mr. Rascoff. Mr. President, our first question comes from Andrew Houston in Gainesville, Florida. Let's watch his video.

[*At this point, a video was shown.*]

Housing Market/Mortgage Interest Rates/Mortgage Refinancing

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. My name is Andrew Houston in Gainesville, Florida, and I was wondering how you feel rising interest rates over the last 3 months are going to affect the housing recovery going forward. I was actually fortunate enough to refinance at historically low rates earlier this year, but I am still well in excess of 30 percent negative on my mortgage, and I'm wondering how these interest rates are going to affect the future value of my home. Thank you very much for your time.

The President. Well, it's a great question, and obviously, particularly in States like Florida, where, when the housing bubble burst, it was very painful. A lot of people have been watching the interest rates and watching what are happening with home values.

Just a little bit of historic context. What we saw in terms of the plunge in home prices in the midst of the great recession was something we hadn't seen in a very long time. And it hurt a lot of families. Home ownership is the quintessential element of the American Dream. It's what all of us understand when we say we want to have some middle class security.

And so what we did over the first 3½, 4 years of my administration was throw everything that we could at helping homeowners who had seen their houses go underwater to slowly build back that equity. With the help of the Federal Reserve, interest rates came down. And as you said, Spencer, what we've seen is healing pretty much across the country when it comes to the housing market.

We've also seen a lot of refinancing activity, in part because we modified some administrative rules so that folks who had Government guarantees could refinance even if they were underwater. And it saves people a lot of money, up to $3,000. We've seen interest rates now tick up. So far at least, though, the housing market has continued to be fairly robust. And there's been reporting just this week, some of the data has come in showing that you're still seeing some good, steady growth.

But I think that all of us recognize that it is still a soft housing market, in part because it's still a soft employment market. There are still a lot of folks who are out of work. And the real economy is directly related to the housing market. So what we've heard from the Federal Reserve Chairman is that he thinks it's important for interest rates to remain relatively low so long as unemployment remains high. That should continue to help the housing market.

But given that interest rates tick up a little bit as the economy improves, it is especially important for Congress to act on the proposal that we put forward, which says let's not just let a few people refinance, let's allow everybody who is potentially eligible to go ahead and refinance. It can end up being the equivalent of a $3,000 tax cut, basically, money in your pocket; or alternatively, as Andrew was talking about, it gives homeowners an opportunity to start building back some of the equity in the home that they lost during the great recession.

Mr. Rascoff. And you're referring to HARP 3, which we have a lot of questions about, so we're certainly going to discuss that. To keep the long-term perspective, mortgage rates have ticked up about a point, but we're still in the low fours, which, if you take the long view, is still an incredibly low rate for a mortgage.

The President. Well, not to get too personal, but our home back in Chicago—not the White House, which, as I said, that's a rental—[*laughter*]—our home back in Chicago, my mortgage interest rate, I would probably benefit from refinancing right now. [*Laughter*] I would save some money. When you're President, you have to be a little careful about these transactions, so we haven't refinanced. But there's no doubt that somebody like Michelle and I, who bought our house several years ago, that if we went out to the market right now, we'd end up saving some money.

Mr. Rascoff. Right, right.

This next question comes from Jill Fitzpatrick, from Louisiana, and she's from a part of the country where home values have bounced 20 percent off the bottom. Let's watch Jill's video.

[*A video was shown.*]

Home Ownership/Housing Market

Q. My name is Jill Fitzpatrick. I was wondering what changes you think could be made to help second-time homeowners. I refer specifically to young families who lost considerable equity in their first homes due to the housing bust, families faced with buying a second, larger house now in a market like New Orleans, where I live, where prices have skyrocketed astronomically, pricing many of us out of what should have been a logical and economically feasible next move.

The President. Well, I think the point that was made there is really important. Most of us, when we buy our first home, we buy a starter home. When Michelle and I bought our first home, we bought a condo, and lived in it for about 10 years before we then moved into a full-fledged stand-alone home. And the reason we were able to do it was because we built up some equity, as well as got some raises and eventually were able to get the down payment together for a larger house. It's tougher now for folks who have lost their equity.

I can't say that there is a magic formula in a situation that was just described, in a place like New Orleans. On the one hand, it's great that housing values have bounced back; on the other hand, most folks haven't gotten all their equity back if they purchased right in 2005 or 2004, right before the bubble popped.

What we do know is that if, number one, we keep interest rates low, that will help. Number two, that keeping the overall economy moving in the right direction means that there is a stronger market for homes and the values of

the existing starter home goes up. The good news is, is that you've got a lot of potential families or families that put off buying a home during the midst of the recession, and so if you look at the numbers, the amount of new family formation is going to be increasing fairly rapidly. There's going to be pent-up demand. And potentially, those smaller starter homes, they're going to increase in value as well.

And one of the things that we've been looking at is, finally, how can we make sure that more people whose homes are still underwater can potentially benefit from the refinancing programs that we talked about.

Home Affordable Refinance Program/Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae)/Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. (Freddie Mac)

Mr. Rascoff. All right. So that's a perfect segue to the next question, which is in fact about HARP 3. So this question comes from Colin Robertson. And of course, HARP is the Government program which lets homeowners who are underwater on their home refinance their mortgage, as long as they're not more than 20-percent underwater and as long as their loans are backed by Fannie and Freddie. About 10 percent of the questions submitted today were about HARP.

So Colin writes to us. He says: "What's happening with MyRefi or HARP 3? Is there any hope of such a program?"

The President. I think there should be hope. Keep in mind that this is a program that not only I put forward and supported and talked about during the State of the Union, but this was an idea that was strongly supported by Mitt Romney's chief economic adviser. So there shouldn't be an ideological barrier to getting this done. This should be something that Democrats and Republics can come together and get done.

Now, Congress, I think all of us recognize, has been a little broken lately. But the good news is, is that there are Republican and Democratic Senators, at least, who have been in a conversation about how do we learn the lessons of the past and start building a firmer foundation for housing going forward. And a lot of the concerns, a lot of the questions had to do with how do we get Fannie and Freddie reformed so that they are not in a situation in which taxpayers are essentially subsidizing huge risks that they're taking.

As part of a package, you could see Fannie and Freddie reform that protects taxpayers, puts housing on a more stable footing, but in the interim also provides some immediate relief to homeowners, giving them a chance to refinance while interest rates are still low.

So this is something that I'm going to push again once Congress gets back in September, once they're back in session. As part of a broader package of housing reform, let's see if we can potentially even get this done before the end of the year.

Home Foreclosures/Housing Market

Mr. Rascoff. And we're going to talk about GSE reform, which was a very hot topic among the questions that were submitted as well.

This question is from Jason Boatman, from Phoenix. Phoenix, of course, is one of the parts of the country that was hardest hit by the recession. It's where you delivered a very important housing address yesterday. Let's see what Jason has to say.

Jason writes: "I live in the greater Phoenix area. My neighborhood has been hit very hard by the foreclosure crisis. Things are finally starting to look up, but we're certainly not back to prerecession levels. How is the administration planning to help homeowners in areas like Phoenix regain our footing?"

The President. Well, there were some areas like Phoenix, like Las Vegas, parts of Florida, that had been especially hard hit. So in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, one of the things that we did was to get a special fund allocated to those States specifically to help some of these communities. In some cases, it meant more hands-on help and counseling for homeowners in these areas. In some cases, it was a question of States or local communities finding ways to get some of the foreclosed properties off the market or at least stabilized so that they weren't depressing adjoining properties.

And we are continuing to work with the mayor of Phoenix, the mayor of Las Vegas, those communities that had been especially hard hit.

In some areas, one of the questions is, are there so many foreclosures and abandoned properties that it actually pays off for us to either repair them and put them on the market as rental properties, or alternatively, in certain areas of the country where these are really rundown properties, go ahead and tear them down.

The advantage of putting these on the rental market is obviously if somebody is living in them, they're more likely to maintain them, and it creates the kind of atmosphere in the neighborhood that allows property values to go back up. And we've got a lot of creative programs like that. What we want to do is make sure that there are enough resources coming out of Congress. And the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development I know has a number of ideas about how we can have even more of an impact in revitalizing some of those communities that have been hardest hit.

Mr. Rascoff. It's been great to see in some of these communities institutional investors have been buying up tens of thousands of these properties and rehabbing them and then renting them, in some cases, renting them to the existing homeowners who are underwater on their own home.

The President. That makes a lot of sense, and it's good business sense. Look, we know that a basic principle of the free market is if you can buy low and sell high, you're in a pretty good spot. These institutional investors pulling together big chunks of property, going ahead and making them rental properties, which help to cover their costs immediately, but they're also hoping to see appreciation in the long term. That can be good business sense for them. But just as importantly, or more importantly, for those middle class families where they saw these property values drop, having that kind of stabilization can really make a difference.

And in a place like Phoenix, we've actually seen 20-, 25-percent increases in property values. People are feeling much more optimistic about the future than they were before. And we're also seeing more housing construction going up, which tells you that there's still pentup demand out there. We've just got to make sure that we get everybody firing on all cylinders to maximize it.

Mr. Rascoff. This next question comes from Jacob. Jacob is among the one in three millennials who lives with his parents because he can't find affordable housing. So let's watch Jacob's video.

[*A video was shown.*]

Rental Housing/Government-Sponsored Enterprises/Higher Education Costs/Immigration Reform

Q. Good morning, President Obama. My name is Jacob, and I live in L.A. I'm a recent college graduate with a full-time job, but I still live at home with my parents. I'm wondering, with massive student loan debt, will I ever be able to move into a house of my own? Not even looking to buy, just looking to rent.

The President. Well, Jacob asks a question that a lot of young people are asking right now. And there are two components to it. Number one, we need more affordable, quality rental housing. And what I said in my speech yesterday, all of us, long term, have the aspiration of a home of our own. But in a lot of markets, renting is a great option, especially if you're still young. And so as we look at the various housing proposals that I've put forward—making sure that people can refinance, making sure that we're reforming these GSEs—one of the components is also making sure that we've got more resources to construct or get on the market more affordable housing.

And that is not something that people should shy away from, deciding that at this stage in their lives—Jacob looked like a pretty young guy—that renting is probably the best option, until you know that you can actually purchase safely, soundly, and make your payments. Part of what happened during the housing bubble was that people who probably should have been renting were encouraged to

go into the housing market, and they got hurt and the economy as a whole got hurt.

But he also mentioned something else, which is the fact that a lot of young people, what for their parents would have been the down payment on a home right now is going to service their student loan debt.

Mr. Rascoff. Right.

The President. So I know that Zillow is focused on housing and not college education, but I will say that some of the initiatives that I'm putting forward to drive down the cost of college and the debt burdens that young people have when they get out of school can make a huge difference in the housing market over the long term, because the $30,000 or $25,000 on average that young people from State universities are coming out with in terms of debt, that's a down payment on a house.

And so we've got a whole range of ideas about how we can drive tuition down, work with universities to be more efficient, help young people graduate faster so that they're not ending up spending more money, reducing the interest rates on student loans. All that will have an impact on the housing market.

I should add, by the way, there's another issue that doesn't seem like it's related to the housing market, but actually is related, and that's immigration reform. We know that if we get immigration reform done, suddenly, you've got all kinds of families coming out of the shadows, paying taxes, paying penalties, but they're also going to be really likely to buy homes, oftentimes in some of the neighborhoods where you have the most foreclosures, the most trouble. They add value to a community, increase property values.

And over the long term, it's one of the reasons why it's estimated that immigration reform would actually add a trillion dollars to the overall economy, it's partly because they'd be buying houses.

Mr. Rascoff. It's what's so interesting about the housing industry overall is it impacts all these disparate issues, from immigration to student loans to the global economy. So it's——

The President. Well, part of—and the reason is, is because this is where most Americans have their wealth.

Mr. Rascoff. It's where our wealth is. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. So if you've got trillions of dollars tied up in housing, if we get that right, then it makes a big difference everywhere else.

Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae)/Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. (Freddie Mac)

Mr. Rascoff. All right, so the big one, GSE reform. This next question comes in from Steve from Bloomington, Minnesota. And Steve writes: "If Congress is successful"—and if you're successful—"in scaling Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac down, what model fills the gap?"

The President. Well, we are fairly unique in the sense that most advanced developed countries don't have such a large government presence in the housing market. Traditionally, Fannie and Freddie was supposed to be subsidiary to the private marketplace. And prior to the great recession, in fact, Fannie and Freddie's portfolio was as a total a smaller percentage of the overall lending that was taking place in the housing market. Now it's significantly higher, right?

And what we've tried to do is to make sure that we're providing the support we need to help the housing market heal, but recognize you can't have a situation in which the Government is underwriting and guaranteeing all the mortgage lending that's taking place around the country and big profits are being made by these quasi-private institutions, and then if things go wrong, suddenly taxpayers are on the hook.

So a couple of things that we've done administratively, we've been trying to reduce the portfolio each year by an incremental amount so——

Mr. Rascoff. The loans owned by Fannie and Freddie.

The President. ——loans owned by Fannie and Freddie—not too quickly, but allowing the market to catch up.

Our long-term goal is to say let's have the private market get in there and provide those loans. And what the Government can do is to step in to make sure, for example, that there's still a 30-year mortgage available, to make sure that homes that are not too upscale are available for young families, for veterans, for folks who may have some limited means, but have saved and scrapped and are ready to go out there and buy.

But, for example, we increased the maximum home value that could be financed in the midst of the recession because it helped to strengthen homes. Now we're starting to scale that back. And we're actually confident that the private market can step in, do a good job, and the Government can be a backstop so that we still have affordability and 30-year mortgages, but it's not the dominant player.

And in some ways, it's a return to earlier models. The way to think about it, I think, is that during both the housing bubble and its aftermath, Fannie and Freddie just got too big, and that was anomalous. That was not sort of typical of what's happened during the course of our history in the housing market.

So the good news is that you've got a bipartisan bill; Senators Warner of Virginia and Corker of Tennessee are working together. The principles that they have announced are ones that are pretty consistent with me: Let's have the market get in there. Let's make sure you don't have a "heads I win, tails you lose" formula for Fannie and Freddie, so that taxpayers aren't left on the hook, but we're still focusing on affordability, we still are focused on a 30-year mortgage.

And my expectation is, is that if a bill passes—and I think it's the right thing to do for the economy over the long term—it's still going to be phased in. So the one thing we want to prevent is just at a time when the housing market is getting back on its feet, that suddenly you have a big shock to the system. This is something that would have to be phased in over a number of years and I'm confident could be done.

And look, lenders can go in there and make some money doing it. In fact, you could argue that part of the reason why a lot of first-time buyers or well-qualified buyers are having trouble right now is that a lot of lenders are worried that Fannie and Freddie and the Government-backed loans may end up squeezing them if for some reason buyers aren't making their payments. And so they're tightening up their——

Mr. Rascoff. Their own standards.

The President. ——status and that the market might be willing to take more educated risks about the market if, in fact, you had the private sector back in there.

Mr. Rascoff. So from Fannie and Freddie to loans not backed by Fannie and Freddie, this next question comes from Elias. And about 30 percent of our questions actually touch on themes that Elias asks about. Let's watch his video.

[*A video was shown.*]

Home Affordable Refinance Program

Q. Mr. President, what help is available for homeowners who are looking to refinance, but don't have their loan backed by Freddie or Fannie? Thank you.

The President. Well that's—we've already talked about that. That's the HAMP 3 program——

Mr. Rascoff. HARP.

The President. ——HARP 3 program. And so this is something that can get done.

Keep in mind, by the way, this would be good for the entire economy, because some of the money would go back to building equity. But some folks would decide they're going to buy a new laptop for their kid who's going off to college, or they'd end up using that to help finance a new car. And as a consequence, the entire economy would be more likely to pop, which in turn would help the housing market and help home values.

Mr. Rascoff. So tell Elias to root for HARP 3. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, don't just root for it. Everybody who's on Zillow, there's no reason why you shouldn't contact your Congressman

and say, why aren't we doing this? This should be a no-brainer.

Teachers/Rental Housing/Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Mr. Rascoff. All right. Our last question comes from Jennifer in North Carolina. Jennifer writes in, she says: "I'm a high school teacher in North Carolina. I get paid so little that I can't afford my own apartment. The rent here goes up every year, but I haven't had a raise in years. A fixed mortgage would be more consistent than rising rents, but I don't have the job stability." So what advice would you give to someone like Jennifer, and how can the Government help?

The President. Well, the first thing I'd say is, teachers need to get paid more. And I mean that. Look, one of the challenges that we've seen is, is that middle class families—teachers, construction workers, firefighters—their wages and incomes have not gone up even if their jobs have held steady. Some of them have lost jobs.

And one of the big challenges for our housing market is making sure that not only do we have a strong employment market, but people, if they're working hard, they should be getting paid a decent wage. And a lot of what I'm doing and will continue to do for the remainder of my Presidency is focused on how are we improving middle class security. And teachers fall in that category.

Now, we already talked about the fact that renting can be a good option if we get more affordable rental housing on the market. And there are a number of communities that have been doing creative stuff. There are a number of properties that right now are sitting there not being rented, big chunks in certain cities. In my hometown of Chicago, for example, we could be renovating, rehabbing, and putting on the rental market thousands of units that would help to stabilize rental prices. Ideally for somebody like Jennifer, renting for a while at a affordable rate that allows you then to save a nest egg that lets you then put your down payment on a home. That's traditionally how folks did it.

It's nice if your parents can help you or your grandparents. But for folks like Michelle and I, who didn't come from a fancy background—actually, we lived in Michelle's mom's house for a couple of years.

Mr. Rascoff. Just like Jacob. [*Laughter*]

The President. Just like Jacob—before we were able to get the down payment together. And that's how we do things.

So just one closing comment, Spencer. I think you guys have done a great job in helping to make consumers more empowered when they are buying a home, selling a home. And it's a wonderful service. One of the things that we're really proud of is the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau that we've put together, headed up by Richard Cordray, a former attorney general in Ohio. And the CFPB, as we call it, its entire job is, how do we help consumers so they get a fair deal?

One of their key focus areas has been on home finance and mortgages. And we can expect that we're going to try to simplify mortgage as soon as the fall, so that you don't have a lot of fine print, you know exactly what you're getting. Somebody who's involved in a transaction can operate with some complete transparency; they can know what they might owe once they get a mortgage potentially approved.

The more knowledge consumers have, the more empowered they're going to be and the more likely they're going to be to live out the American Dream that I think all of us want to see not just for ourselves, but for our kids and our grandkids.

Mr. Rascoff. And we have been big fans of what the CFPB is trying to do with mortgages, and we've actually been working with them and giving them comments on it. So Zillow is all about transparency of information, empowering consumers. And so certainly if we can make it easier for people to understand the complexities of a mortgage, then that would be great for the country.

The President. Absolutely. Well, you guys have done a great job.

Mr. Rascoff. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And a big thank you to the thousands of Americans who submitted

questions. I hope this conversation answered a lot of them. And Zillow is honored to have hosted this event. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:01 a.m. at the Hilton Woodland Hills hotel. In his remarks, he referred to R. Glenn Hubbard, dean, Columbia University Business School, in his former capacity as chief economic adviser to 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; Mayor Greg Stanton of Phoenix, AZ; and Mayor Carolyn G. Goodman of Las Vegas, NV. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Remarks at Camp Pendleton, California
August 7, 2013

The President. Hello, Marines!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Hello, Camp Pendleton!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Well, listen, it is great to be here, at the home of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——and one of our Nation's oldest and most decorated military units, the legendary 1st Marine Division.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And I think I see some proud Navy folks here too.

Audience members. Hooah!

Let me thank General Nicholson for the introduction and for his outstanding leadership of our Marines in Iraq, in Afghanistan. And that includes your command of the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade out of Camp Lejeune, which we recognized last year with the Presidential Unit Citation. Thank you, General Nicholson.

I want to thank all of your commanders for welcoming me today, including General Coglianese and General Busby. And I want to recognize your incredible staff, noncommissioned officers, including Sergeant Majors Ronald Green, Scott Helms, and David Jobe.

I want to salute Debbie Nicholson and all the spouses and military families who are here, because we understand they're the force behind the force, just like Michelle is the force behind me. I want everyone to give a big round of applause to the amazing families who serve along with you.

And I want to acknowledge Members of Congress who are here, including Susan Davis, Darrell Issa, and Dana Rohrabacher.

Now, I've got to tell you the truth, I've been looking forward to this visit because—and this is a little tricky to say this—but my family and I, we've got a special place in our hearts for the Marine Corps.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Now, part of it is because every day at the White House, we're surrounded by marines.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. In fact, we've probably got some folks here who were at the White House, who are now here at Camp Pendleton.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. See? [*Laughter*] I figured as much.

And then, of course, every time I need kind of a hop, skip, and a jump somewhere, every time I get on Marine One, I rely on some of the best aviators in the world. I've seen your honor, I've seen your courage, I've seen your commitment, whether in protecting our diplomatic posts around the world or preparing to deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan or recovering from wounds received in battle.

A few years ago, you gave a great Camp Pendleton welcome to my wife Michelle. And I know it's not as exciting when I come to visit—[*laughter*]—but she says hi. I guess I'm kind of like that Army general who once said, "The more marines I have around, the better I like it."

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I'm here because, for more than a decade, you—and all our men and women in uniform—have borne the burden in this

time of war. Ever since that awful September morning when our Nation was attacked, when thousands of innocent Americans were killed, we've been at war against Al Qaida. And our fight in Afghanistan—nearly 12 years—has become America's longest war. I'm here because we recently marked another milestone in this war. As of this past June, for the first time, Afghan forces have taken the lead for security across their entire country.

Instead of leading the fight, our troops now have a different mission, which is to train and advise and assist Afghan forces. And what that signals is that our war in Afghanistan has entered the final chapter. More of our troops are coming home. We'll be down to 34,000 this winter. By the end of next year—in just 17 months—the transition will be complete. Afghans will take full responsibility for their security, and our war in Afghanistan will be over.

None of this progress would have been possible had it not been for you. We thank all who have served there, especially our Camp Pendleton marines. After our Nation was attacked, you were some of the very first conventional forces in Afghanistan; racing in, hundreds of miles by helicopter, toppling that regime and driving Al Qaida from its camps. Then when the fight shifted to Iraq, you were there, racing towards Baghdad, deposing a dictator. And through years of combat—in Tikrit, Fallujah, and Ramadi—your courage added to the glories of the Marines' long and illustrious history.

When we refocused on Afghanistan, you led the way again, surging into Helmand, pushing the Taliban out of its strongholds, like Marjah and Now Zad and Sangin.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And when future generations study those fights, they will stand in awe of the unparalleled sacrifice of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines—our "Darkhorse" Marines.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Today we hold close the memory of all who have made the ultimate sacrifice in these years of war. That includes 326 fallen heroes from Camp Pendleton. We honor all of them, every single one. And we stand with their families, like the Gold Star families that I had an opportunity to meet with before I came out here. We are grateful to them. We're grateful for their sacrifice. They've given a piece of their heart to America, and America will always honor their sacrifice.

I know some of you recently returned from Afghanistan. On behalf of a grateful nation, welcome home. We send our prayers to all those who, at this very moment, are still in harm's way, including your Regimental Combat Team 7, which is coming home this month.

Audience members. Yeah!

The President. I know some of you are getting ready to deploy in the months to come.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. This is still a hard fight. Our Afghan partners have stepped up. They're bearing a bigger brunt of the firepower. They're taking on a lot more casualties. They're in the lead, but it's still tough. And we're still needed.

And here's what I want every single one of you to know. Because of you, the 9/11 generation, we are accomplishing what we set out to do. Because of you, Usama bin Laden is no more.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Because of you, Al Qaida's top ranks have been hammered. The core of Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the way to defeat. That happened because of you. Because of you, more Afghans are reclaiming their communities—their markets, their schools, their towns—and they have a chance to forge their own future. Because of you, more Afghans are trained and stepping up and defending their own country. Because of you—and to preserve the gains you fought and bled for—we are going to make sure that Afghanistan is never again a source of attacks against our country.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. That happened because of you.

So the war in Afghanistan will end. For you, that means fewer deployments. It means more training time, preparing for the future, getting back to what marines do better than anybody else on Earth: amphibious operations.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. It means more time here on the home front with your families: your wives, your husbands, your kids.

But of course, the end of the war in Afghanistan doesn't mean the end of threats to our Nation. As I've said before, even as we decimated the Al Qaida leadership that attacked us on 9/11, Al Qaida affiliates and like-minded extremists still threaten our homeland, still threaten our diplomatic facilities, still threaten our businesses abroad. And we've got to take these threats seriously and do all we can to confront them. We've been reminded of this again in recent days.

So I want to take a special time out to salute all our brave diplomats and tireless intelligence and military personnel who have been working around the clock to safeguard our Embassies and our consulates and our fellow Americans serving overseas, including all those vigilant marines standing guard at our Embassies around the world. They're doing an outstanding job.

As for these extremists, here's what those who would cowardly attack our civilians don't get: The United States is never going to retreat from the world. We don't get terrorized. We're going to keep standing up for our interests. We're going to keep standing up for the security of our citizens. We're going to keep standing up for human rights and dignity for people wherever they live. We're going to keep working with our allies and our partners. We're going to keep offering a future of hope and progress, in stark contrast to terrorists who only know how to kill and destroy and maim. And like generations before us, the United States of America is going to remain the greatest force for freedom that the world has ever known.

You are an integral part of that. That's what you do, serving in uniform every single day. But this is not just a job for our military. It takes diplomacy, it takes development, it takes trade, it takes intelligence to stay true to our values as a nation. This is a complicated time. The world is going through big changes, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. And we have to have a military strategy to protect ourselves. But we've also got to lead with our values and our ideals and all elements of our power.

But it does mean keeping our military the absolute best in the world. We've got to be vigilant about that. As the war in Afghanistan ends, it's true, our military, including our Marine Corps, will be leaner. Budgets will be tighter, and that's only natural. Part of ending a war responsibly is moving off a perpetual wartime footing. It's time to use some of the money we've been spending on war to do some nation-building right here at home.

But what we can't do is repeat the mistakes of history. We've seen in the past where, after a war, we hollowed out our military, left our military unprepared. We've got right now the best led, best trained, best equipped military in human history. Our Marine Corps is the finest expeditionary force in the world.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And as long as I am Commander in Chief, I'm going to keep it that way.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Now, to do that, we're going to need some help out of Washington. Congress couldn't agree on a plan to reduce the deficit in a—what I consider a sensible way, so instead what we've got is these big, across-the-board cuts called the sequester. Sequester kicked in; it includes defense. And we're already starting to see the effects. Here at Pendleton, you're feeling it. Hard-working folks are getting furloughed, families getting by on less, fewer ships available for your training exercises, the commissary your families rely on closed a day a week. We can do better than that. That's not how a great nation should be treating its military and military families.

And by the way, cuts in other nondefense areas of the budget affect our troops and our military families as well. Our military, part of what makes us best is we've got extraordinary recruits. But if we want the best qualified recruits, we shouldn't be cutting investments in education. We should be increasing our investments in education.

Our wounded warriors, our veterans depend on new technologies for their recovery and

their health care, so we shouldn't be slashing investments in science and medical research. We should continue to be the world leader in science and research.

So that's why I'm going to keep on working to get rid of this sequester. You get up and do your jobs every day; let's make sure Washington gets up and does its job.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And what makes me frustrated is, sometimes, the very folks who say they stand with our military proudly, are the same ones who are standing in the way of fixing the sequester.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. It's important to look at deeds and not words.

Now, keep in mind, it is true that for our national security we've always got to look and make sure we're dealing with our deficits and our debt. Our economy is strong, that means the military will be strong. If our economy is weak, that weakens our military. But our deficits right now are falling at the fastest rate in decades. We've cut them in half, and they keep on moving in the right direction. In that context, Congress needs to agree on a responsible plan that reduces our deficits, but also keeps our military strong, also invests in education, also invests in research, also invests in our infrastructure.

That's what you deserve. That's what your families deserve. That's what I'm fighting for, and that is my commitment to you.

Now, keeping our military strong requires something else, and that's taking care of our extraordinary wounded warriors. Here at Pendleton, you're doing outstanding work. For those who can, we want to get our troops back to where they want to be: back with their units. For those with traumatic brain injury, we're going to keep making unprecedented investments in new care and new treatments. For those suffering from posttraumatic stress, we're going to keep saying it as loud as we can: It is not a sign of weakness to ask for help, it is a sign of strength. And we're here to help you recover and stand tall again.

We've got to make sure that we're doing everything we can for our wounded warriors. And I'm pleased to see that the hospital here is making progress. That's going to be an outstanding new facility that will be helpful.

Keeping our military strong also means ensuring the safety of everyone who puts on the uniform. No military unit can succeed without discipline, without trust, and without cohesion. So I want you to hear it directly from me, the Commander in Chief: It undermines what this military stands for and it undermines what the Marine Corps stands for when sexual assault takes place within our units. And that's why we are going to work together—all of us—to stop these crimes of sexual assault and uphold the honor and the integrity that defines the finest military on Earth. And that message is coming all the way from the top.

Keeping our military strong means keeping our military families strong. Michelle and Vice President—the—Joe Biden's wife, Dr. Jill Biden, they've made this their mission. And because of their efforts—Joining Forces—more Americans are stepping up to support your families. And that includes more companies hiring our talented military spouses. After everything you've done for America, every American ought to be doing something to support your families.

As this time of war ends, some of you will be taking off the uniform and returning to civilian life. And just as we gave you the tools to succeed on the battlefield, I want to make sure we're giving you the tools to succeed in the next stage of your lives as well.

So we've improved transition assistance to help you find the job that's worthy of your skills. We're helping you and your families pursue your education under the post-9/11 GI bill and making sure that instead of ripping you off, schools that give you the education you paid for are being held accountable.

We're making sure more States and more industries are recognizing your military skills with licenses and credentials you need for a civilian job. When I first came into office, I was meeting medics who had been treating folks on the battlefield, and when they went back to

school because they wanted to be a nurse, they had to start all over again at Nursing 101. And here they are, dealing with some of the worst injuries possible, and they're not getting any credit for it, which means it's costing them time, costing them money. We're changing all that. If you've done the job on the battlefield with bullets coming at you, you can sure as heck do the job back here in the United States of America.

Then we issued a challenge to the private sector, and so far, America's businesses have hired or trained 290,000 veterans and military spouses, and they've committed to hiring hundreds of thousands more. So more vets are finding jobs. The unemployment rate for vets is coming down. And we're going to keep saying to every company in America, if you want somebody who knows how to get the job done, hire a veteran.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Hire a veteran. Your generation has carried us through this time of war; well, you're going to help us write the next great chapter in American history, right here at home.

Now, few embody that truth more than a marine who's here today, Captain Matthew Lampert. Matt is one of our Marine special operators. He and his team were in Afghanistan cleaning out a compound, and then, in a terrible incident, an IED took both of his legs. Matt survived. And soon he had a new mission: getting back to his unit, back to his team. "Once a marine, always a marine."

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. So Matt endured excruciating rehab, therapy that could last all day, month after month, rebuilding his strength. Recovery was slow: taking his first shaky steps on short prosthetics; then a new pair of knees; then full legs, taking him back to normal height; stepping forward with two canes, then just one, then none; learning to walk again; learning to run, in his uniform, then his body armor. And then, just 18 months after he was injured and lost both legs, Matt—a double amputee—returned to his unit and redeployed to Afghanistan.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. For a time, Matt even served as team leader. And today, Matt and his company are preparing for their next deployment, to the Pacific. His wife Camille, also a marine, is working to become a test pilot because, Matt says, she likes to "fly aggressively." [*Laughter*] And this inspiring Marine couple is looking ahead to serving their country for many years to come.

Matt and Camille, please wave. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

There are stories like Matt and Camille's throughout our Marine Corps. They represent what's best in our Marine Corps. Semper Fidelis.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. That's the ethic of your lives: Always faithful. Always faithful to each other, the few and the proud. Always faithful to your Corps, for 237 years. Always faithful to your country, for whom you wear the eagle, globe, and anchor. After all you've given to our Nation, you have to know your Nation will always be faithful to you.

As your Commander in Chief, that's my commitment to you. That's the commitment America must uphold to you and your family for all the years to come.

Semper Fi. God bless you all. God bless the Marine Corps, and God bless the United States of America.

Audience members. Hooah!

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in Hangar 6 West. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Lawrence D. Nicholson, USMC, commander, 1st Marine Division, and his wife Debbie; Brig. Gen. Vincent A. Coglianese, USMC, commander, 1st Marine Logistics Group; Maj. Gen. Steven W. Busby, USMC, commander, 3d Marine Air Wing; Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Green, USMC, sergeant major, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and U.S. Marine Central Command; Sgt. Maj. Scott R. Helms, USMC, sergeant major, Marine Corps Installations West-Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton; and Sgt. Maj. David L. Jobe, USMC, sergeant major, 1st Marine Division.

Statement on the 15th Anniversary of the Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania
August 7, 2013

Today marks the 15th anniversary of Al Qaida's terrorist attacks against the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which killed innocent Americans and Africans. On this day, we honor the families of the 12 Americans who lost their lives, and we join with the people and Governments of Kenya and Tanzania honoring the sacrifices of the African victims of this heinous act, which killed over 200 and wounded over 5,000.

Last month, I was honored to pay tribute to those who lost their lives and to meet with some of the survivors at a memorial to the fallen in Dar es Salaam. The United States is steadfast in our commitment to protect the American men and women who dutifully serve our Nation overseas, and we will remain resolute in working with our partners to combat violent extremism in East Africa, across the region, and around the world. We continue to stand with our East African partners to bring terrorists to justice and will carry on our efforts to prevent these attacks in the future. On this day of remembrance, we extend our deepest thoughts and prayers to the families of those killed and wounded in the 1998 attack, and we join with our friends and partners in East Africa and around the globe in honoring their memory by building a safer, more secure, and more prosperous world.

Statement on the Observance of Eid al-Fitr
August 7, 2013

Michelle and I send our warmest greetings to Muslims celebrating Eid al-Fitr here in the United States and around the world. During the past month, Muslims have honored their faith through prayer and service, fasting, and time spent with loved ones. At this year's White House iftar, I was proud to spend time with some of the many American Muslims whose contributions enrich our democracy and strengthen our economy. Many of us have had the opportunity to break fast with our Muslim friends and colleagues, a tradition that reminds us to be grateful for our blessings and to show compassion to the less fortunate among us, including millions of Syrians who spent Ramadan displaced from their homes, their families, and their loved ones. To help the many Syrians in need this Eid al-Fitr, the United States is providing an additional $195 million in food aid and other humanitarian aid, bringing our humanitarian contribution to the Syrian people to over $1 billion since the crisis began. For millions of Americans, Eid is part of a great tapestry of America's many traditions, and I wish all Muslims a blessed and joyful celebration. *Eid mubarak*.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Antonios Samaras of Greece and an Exchange With Reporters
August 8, 2013

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome Prime Minister Samaras and his delegation to the Oval Office and the United States. It goes without saying that the friendship, the bonds between the United States and Greece are as deep and as broad as any relations that we have.

Our Government owes a great debt to Greece: our form of government. The Greek American community here are incredible businesspeople and political leaders and community leaders and great friends of mine. And that bond that extends beyond governments, but

goes to our peoples, I think is what makes Greek-American relations so special.

Prime Minister Samaras comes here at a time when I think we're all aware Greece is going through incredible challenges. And so far, the Prime Minister has taken some very bold and difficult actions to initiate the structural reforms that can help reduce the debt burden that Greece experiences, but even more importantly, can unleash the incredible talents of the Greek people so that they are effectively competing in this new world economy.

We had an extensive discussion about the challenges that remain, and I'm confident that Prime Minister Samaras is committed to continuing on these structural reforms. What we also agreed to is that in dealing with the challenges that Greece faces, we cannot simply look to austerity as a strategy. It's important that we have a plan for fiscal consolidations to manage the debt, but it's also important that growth and jobs are our focus, because we know from history that those countries that are growing, those countries where employment is high and people are increasing their productivity and feel as if the economy is moving forward, those countries have an easier time reducing their debt burdens than countries that—where people are feeling hopeless.

And I think Prime Minister Samaras is committed to taking the tough actions that are required, but also, understandably, wants to make sure that the Greek people see a light at the end of the tunnel. And what I expressed to him is that the United States wants to continue to be helpful and supportive in what will be a challenging process. But we're confident that Greece can succeed. And the stakes are high for not only Greece, but also Europe and the world economy.

We also discussed the strong bilateral military and intelligence cooperation between our two countries. Greece is a NATO ally. They have worked with us in preventing terrorist threats from actually happening. We have partnered on a whole range of issues. They are host for some of our very important military personnel and assets, and we are very grateful to them for that.

And we also had an opportunity to discuss the general environment around the Mediterranean, in the Balkans. As the Prime Minister put it, sometimes it's a challenging neighborhood, and Greece can play an important stabilizing role and partnership role as we address the issues in the Middle East and North Africa, as we address issues in the Balkans. There's a great opportunity as we speak for the decades-long conflict and tensions that exist in Cyprus to be resolved, and I think we're both encouraged by the messages that have been coming out of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. And we're going to be, I think, working very closely together to see if we can make progress on those fronts.

So this has been an excellent conversation. We are very proud of the friendship and partnership that we have with the Greek people. We want to be as helpful as we can during this period of challenge, and we're confident that the Prime Minister recognizes what needs to be done and is going to be working very hard to accomplish it.

So welcome.

Prime Minister Samaras. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

We had a very good conversation with the President and analysis on different areas. I first of all want to say that our two peoples and our two countries have been more than allies. Not only did they fight next to each other throughout history, always for a noble cause, but they cherished and they supported the same values like freedom, democracy, and independence. So it's good to be here.

In terms of the economy, yes, we have gone through thick and thin. The sacrifices made by the Greek people are huge, but they are not going to be in vain, because what we now need is development of jobs and growth. Of course, we are going to do what has to be done as far as structural changes are concerned, but our emphasis has to be on growth and on the creation of new jobs, especially for the youth, because as I told the President, in Greece, the unemployment for the youth has reached incredible numbers: 60 percent. And total unemployment of 28 percent. And the Greek people have

sacrificed more than a quarter of their GDP only in the last 4 years. So, by definition, emphasis is on growth creation.

But the other thing I want to say is that if Greece succeeds—and it will succeed—our success story is going also to be a European success story. And I believe this is very important. On the other hand, we are trying to do as much as we can to stabilize a very destabilized environment where we live. I believe that the region has many problems. We are going to try and solve as much as we can, establish this cooperation, which I think is important, on the areas that you have described, being always an advocate of international law wherever there are problems around.

I believe that the problems have to do with illegal immigration, internal turbulence in various countries, and even, unfortunately, the problem of terrorism. And I think that there's a lot of synergies that we can have together in order to try and solve as much as we can those problems, including, as you said, the problem of Cyprus, which after the new proposals of the Greek President, opens up a window of opportunity as long as we always, as I said, abide by the international laws and the decisions of the United Nations.

I would also like to say that I told the President that we have found huge energy resources in a critical region. Cyprus, Israel, and Greece can realign those resources in order to be able to satisfy the European demand, especially for natural gas.

And last but not least, I told the President that we will try to do as much as we can during the Greek Presidency in the first semester of next year in order to—with the help of the Italian Presidency that will follow—in order to be able to conclude the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which I think is very important. Because, as you know, Mr. President, Europe and the U.S. together in this trade account, as you've said before, more than 50 percent of the world's GDP. And therefore, it's important, especially for Europe, to liberalize that potential and create new jobs because I think jobs for everyone is the number-one priority, especially to our youth, because everything we are doing has to do with our younger generation.

Again, I want to thank you very, very much for this meeting, and I'm very glad I'm here.

President Obama. Thank you.

Russia

Q. Why not meet with Putin, sir?

Q. Is the reset over?

[*At this point, several other reporters shouted questions.*]

President Obama. Guys, I'm going to be having a press conference tomorrow, so why don't you ask that question tomorrow? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:48 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Samaras referred to President Karolos Papoulias of Greece. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Export Control Regulations

August 8, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within the 90-day period prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency caused by the lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979, as amended, is to

continue in effect for 1 year beyond August 17, 2013.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Signing the Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act of 2013
August 9, 2013

The President. Well, before I sign this, I just want to say thank you to this extraordinary coalition that helped make this signing possible. I want to thank Chairman Kline, all the Members of both House and Senate from both parties that came together to design a sensible, commonsense approach to keeping student interest rates at a reasonable level so that young people have a better opportunity to go to college, get the education that they need, not only to better their own lives, but also to strengthen the country's economy.

And I want to thank the advocates, including some of the young people I suspect will be benefiting from lower student loans—or lower student loan interest rates, because without their voice, without their participation, we probably would not have gotten this bill done.

Last point I'll make, and I suspect the Senators and Congressmen behind me will agree with this, even though we've been able to stabilize the interest rates on student loans, our job's not done, because the cost of college remains extraordinarily high. It's out of reach for a lot of folks, and for those who do end up attending college, the amount of debt that young people are coming out of school with is a huge burden on them. It's a burden on their families. It makes it more difficult for them to buy a home. It makes them more difficult—more difficult for them if they want to start a business. It has a depressive effect on the economy overall. And we've got to do something about it.

So I'm going to be looking forward to engaging this same coalition to see if we can continue to take additional steps to reform our higher education system, and I'll have some more things to say about that in the weeks to come.

But for now, I want to celebrate what we accomplished here and again thank everybody here for their leadership in getting it done.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

Those of you who haven't seen me do this before—[*laughter*]—it is a real art form. [*Laughter*]

Representative John P. Kline. Thank you, Mr. President, with your help on this issue.

Senator Richard J. Durbin. I remember the 90-minute seminar in this office. [*Laughter*]

The President. It was very interesting.

Sen. Durbin. You won't hear from—[*inaudible*].

The President. Yes. It feels good signing bills though; I haven't done this in a while. [*Laughter*] Hint, hint. Hint, hint. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Kline. How about a budget, Mr. President?

The President. There you go. That's what I'm talking about.

All right, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks he referred to Rep. Kline, in his capacity as chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. H.R. 1911, approved August 9, was assigned Public Law No. 113–28.

The President's News Conference
August 9, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat.

Over the past few weeks, I've been talking about what I believe should be our number-one priority as a country: building a better bargain for the middle class and for Americans who want to work their way into the middle class. And at the same time, I'm focused on my number-one responsibility as Commander in Chief, and that's keeping the American people safe. And in recent days, we've been reminded once again about the threats to our Nation.

As I said at the National Defense University back in May, in meeting those threats, we have to strike the right balance between protecting our security and preserving our freedoms. And as part of this rebalancing, I called for a review of our surveillance programs. Unfortunately, rather than an orderly and lawful process to debate these issues and come up with appropriate reforms, repeated leaks of classified information have initiated the debate in a very passionate, but not always fully informed way.

Now, keep in mind that as a Senator, I expressed a healthy skepticism about these programs, and as President, I've taken steps to make sure they have strong oversight by all three branches of Government and clear safeguards to prevent abuse and protect the rights of the American people. But given the history of abuse by governments, it's right to ask questions about surveillance, particularly as technology is reshaping every aspect of our lives.

I'm also mindful of how these issues are viewed overseas because American leadership around the world depends upon the example of American democracy and American openness. Because what makes us different from other countries is not simply our ability to secure our Nation, it's the way we do it: with open debate and democratic process.

In other words, it's not enough for me, as President, to have confidence in these programs. The American people need to have confidence in them as well. And that's why, over the last few weeks, I've consulted Members of Congress who come at this issue from many different perspectives. I've asked the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board to review where our counterterrorism efforts and our values come into tension, and I directed my national security team to be more transparent and to pursue reforms of our laws and practices.

And so today I'd like to discuss four specific steps—not all inclusive, but some specific steps—that we're going to be taking very shortly to move the debate forward.

First, I will work with Congress to pursue appropriate reforms to section 215 of the PATRIOT Act, the program that collects telephone records. As I've said, this program is an important tool in our effort to disrupt terrorist plots. And it does not allow the Government to listen to any phone calls without a warrant. But given the scale of this program, I understand the concerns of those who would worry that it could be subject to abuse. So after having a dialogue with Members of Congress and civil libertarians, I believe that there are steps we can take to give the American people additional confidence that there are additional safeguards against abuse.

For instance, we can take steps to put in place greater oversight, greater transparency, and constraints on the use of this authority. So I look forward to working with Congress to meet those objectives.

Second, I'll work with Congress to improve the public's confidence in the oversight conducted by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, known as the FISC. The FISC was created by Congress to provide judicial review of certain intelligence activities so that a Federal judge must find that our actions are consistent with the Constitution. However, to build greater confidence, I think we should consider some additional changes to the FISC.

One of the concerns that people raise is that a judge reviewing a request from the Government to conduct programmatic surveillance only hears one side of the story: may tilt it too

far in favor of security; may not pay enough attention to liberty. And while I've got confidence in the court and I think they've done a fine job, I think we can provide greater assurances that the court is looking at these issues from both perspectives: security and privacy.

So, specifically, we can take steps to make sure civil liberties concerns have an independent voice in appropriate cases by ensuring that the Government's position is challenged by an adversary.

Number three, we can and must be more transparent. So I've directed the intelligence community to make public as much information about these programs as possible. We've already declassified unprecedented information about the NSA, but we can go further. So at my direction, the Department of Justice will make public the legal rationale for the Government's collection activities under section 215 of the PATRIOT Act. The NSA is taking steps to put in place a full-time civil liberties and privacy officer and released information that details its mission, authorities, and oversight. And finally, the intelligence community is creating a website that will serve as a hub for further transparency, and this will give Americans and the world the ability to learn more about what our intelligence community does and what it doesn't do, how it carries out its mission, and why it does so.

Fourth, we're forming a high-level group of outside experts to review our entire intelligence and communications technologies. We need new thinking for a new era. We now have to unravel terrorist plots by finding a needle in a haystack of global telecommunications. And meanwhile, technology has given Governments, including our own, unprecedented capability to monitor communications.

So I am tasking this independent group to step back and review our capabilities, particularly our surveillance technologies. And they'll consider how we can maintain the trust of the people; how we can make sure that there absolutely is no abuse in terms of how these surveillance technologies are used; ask how surveillance impacts our foreign policy, particularly in an age when more and more information is becoming public. And they will provide an interim report in 60 days and a final report by the end of this year so that we can move forward with a better understanding of how these programs impact our security, our privacy, and our foreign policy.

So all these steps are designed to ensure that the American people can trust that our efforts are in line with our interests and our values. And to others around the world, I want to make clear once again that America is not interested in spying on ordinary people. Our intelligence is focused, above all, on finding the information that's necessary to protect our people and, in many cases, protect our allies.

It's true, we have significant capabilities. What's also true is we show a restraint that many governments around the world don't even think to do, refuse to show, and that includes, by the way, some of America's most vocal critics. Now, we shouldn't forget the difference between the ability of our Government to collect information online under strict guidelines and for narrow purposes and the willingness of some other governments to throw their own citizens in prison for what they say online.

And let me close with one additional thought. The men and women of our intelligence community work every single day to keep us safe because they love this country and believe in our values. They're patriots. And I believe that those who have lawfully raised their voices on behalf of privacy and civil liberties are also patriots who love our country and want it to live up to our highest ideals. So this is how we're going to resolve our differences in the United States: through vigorous public debate, guided by our Constitution, with reverence for our history as a nation of laws, and with respect for the facts.

So with that, I'm going to take some questions. And let's see who we've got here. We're going to start with Julie Pace of AP.

Russia-U.S. Relations/2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask about some of the foreign policy fallout from the disclosure of the NSA programs that

you discussed. Your spokesman said yesterday that there's no question that the U.S. relationship with Russia has gotten worse since Vladimir Putin took office. How much of that decline do you attribute directly to Mr. Putin, given that you seem to have had a good working relationship with his predecessor? Also, will there be any additional punitive measures taken against Russia for granting asylum to Edward Snowden? Or is canceling the September summit really all you can do given the host of issues the U.S. needs Russian cooperation for? Thank you.

The President. Good. I think there's always been some tension in the U.S.-Russian relationship after the fall of the Soviet Union. There's been cooperation in some areas; there's been competition in others.

It is true that in my first 4 years, in working with President Medvedev, we made a lot of progress. And we got START done—or the START II done. We were able to cooperate together on Iran sanctions. They provided us help in terms of supplying our troops in Afghanistan. We were able to get Russia into the WTO, which is not just good for Russia, it's good for our companies and businesses because they're more likely then to follow international norms and rules. So there's been a lot of good work that has been done and that is going to continue to be done.

What's also true is, is that when President Putin—who was Prime Minister when Medvedev was President—came back into power, I think we saw more rhetoric on the Russian side that was anti-American, that played into some of the old stereotypes about the cold war contest between the United States and Russia. And I've encouraged Mr. Putin to think forward as opposed to backwards on those issues, with mixed success.

And I think the latest episode is just one more in a number of emerging differences that we've seen over the last several months around Syria, around human rights issues, where it is probably appropriate for us to take a pause, reassess where it is that Russia is going, what our core interests are, and calibrate the relationship so that we're doing things that are good for the United States and, hopefully, good for Russia as well, but recognizing that there just are going to be some differences and we're not going to be able to completely disguise them.

And that's okay. Keep in mind that although I'm not attending the summit, I'll still be going to St. Petersburg because Russia is hosting the G–20. That's important business in terms of our economy and our jobs and all the issues that are of concern to Americans.

I know that one question that's been raised is, how do we approach the Olympics? I want to just make very clear right now, I do not think it's appropriate to boycott the Olympics. We've got a bunch of Americans out there who are training hard, who are doing everything they can to succeed. Nobody is more offended than me by some of the anti–gay and lesbian legislation that you've been seeing in Russia. But as I said just this week, I've spoken out against that not just with respect to Russia, but a number of other countries where we continue to do work with them, but we have a strong disagreement on this issue.

And one of the things I'm really looking forward to is maybe some gay and lesbian athletes bringing home the gold or silver or bronze, which, I think, would go a long way in rejecting the kind of attitudes that we're seeing there. And if Russia doesn't have gay or lesbian athletes, then it's probably making their team weaker.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden

Q. Are there going to be any additional punitive measures for Russia, beyond canceling the summit?

The President. Keep in mind that our decision to not participate in the summit was not simply around Mr. Snowden. It had to do with the fact that, frankly, on a whole range of issues where we think we can make some progress, Russia has not moved. And so we don't consider that strictly punitive.

We're going to assess where the relationship can advance U.S. interests and increase peace and stability and prosperity around the world. Where it can, we're going to keep on working

with them. Where we have differences, we're going to say so clearly. And my hope is, is that over time, Mr. Putin and Russia recognize that rather than a zero-sum competition, in fact, if the two countries are working together, we can probably advance the betterment of both peoples.

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Given that you just announced a whole bunch of reforms based on, essentially, the leaks that Edward Snowden made on all of these surveillance programs, is that change—is your mindset changed about him? Is he now more a whistleblower than he is a hacker, as you called him at one point or somebody that shouldn't be filed charges? And should he be provided more protection? Is he a patriot? You just used those words. And then just to follow up on the personal—I want to follow up on a personal——

The President. Okay, I want to make sure everybody is asking one question; it would be helpful.

Q. No, I understand. It was a part of a question that you didn't answer. Can you get stuff done with Russia, big stuff done, without having a good personal relationship with Putin?

The President. I don't have a bad personal relationship with Putin. When we have conversations, they're candid, they're blunt; oftentimes, they're constructive. I know the press likes to focus on body language, and he's got that kind of slouch, looking like the bored kid in the back of the classroom. But the truth is, is that when we're in conversations together, oftentimes, it's very productive.

So the issue here really has to do with where do they want to take Russia; it's substantive on a policy front. And——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No. Right now this is just a matter of where Mr. Putin and the Russian people want to go. I think if they are looking forward into the 21st century and how they can advance their economy and make sure that some of our joint concerns around counterterrorism are managed effectively, then I think we can work together. If issues are framed as if U.S. is for it, then Russia should be against it, or we're going to be finding ways where we can poke each other at every opportunity, then probably, we don't get as much stuff done.

See, now I've forgotten your first question, which presumably was the more important one. No, I don't think Mr. Snowden was a patriot. As I said in my opening remarks, I called for a thorough review of our surveillance operations before Mr. Snowden made these leaks.

My preference—and I think the American people's preference—would have been for a lawful, orderly examination of these laws, a thoughtful, fact-based debate that would then lead us to a better place. Because I never made claims that all the surveillance technologies that have developed since the time some of these laws had been put in place somehow didn't require potentially some additional reforms. That's exactly what I called for.

So the fact is, is that Mr. Snowden's been charged with three felonies. If in fact he believes that what he did was right, then, like every American citizen, he can come here, appear before the court with a lawyer, and make his case. If the concern was that somehow this was the only way to get this information out to the public, I signed an Executive order well before Mr. Snowden leaked this information that provided whistleblower protection to the intelligence community for the first time. So there were other avenues available for somebody whose conscience was stirred and thought that they needed to question Government actions.

But having said that, once the leaks have happened, what we've seen is, information come out in dribs and in drabs, sometimes coming out sideways. Once the information is out, the administration comes in, tries to correct the record. But by that time, it's too late or we've moved on, and a general impression has, I think, taken hold not only among the American public, but also around the world that somehow we're out there willy-nilly just

sucking in information on everybody and doing what we please with it.

Now, that's not the case. Our laws specifically prohibit us from surveilling U.S. persons without a warrant. And there are a whole range of safeguards that have been put in place to make sure that that basic principle is abided by.

But what is clear is that whether because of the instinctive bias of the intelligence community to keep everything very close—and probably, what's a fair criticism is my assumption that if we had checks and balances from the courts and Congress, that that traditional system of checks and balances would be enough to give people assurance that these programs were run properly, that assumption, I think, proved to be undermined by what happened after the leaks. I think people have questions about this program.

And so, as a consequence, I think it is important for us to go ahead and answer these questions. What I'm going to be pushing the IC to do is rather than have a trunk come out here and leg come out there and a tail come out there, let's just put the whole elephant out there so people know exactly what they're looking at. Let's examine what is working, what's not, are there additional protections that can be put in place, and let's move forward.

And there's no doubt that Mr. Snowden's leaks triggered a much more rapid and passionate response than would have been the case if I had simply appointed this review board to go through, and I had sat down with Congress, and we had worked this thing through. It would have been less exciting. It would not have generated as much press. I actually think we would have gotten to the same place, and we would have done so without putting at risk our national security and some very vital ways that we are able to get intelligence that we need to secure the country.

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about this debate that's playing itself out in editorial pages, in the blogosphere, even in the Senate Democratic caucus, about the choice you eventually will make of the next Federal Reserve Chairman. There is a perception among Democrats that Larry Summers has the inside track, and perhaps you've made some assurances to him about that. Janet Yellen is the Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve. There are many women in the Senate who are Democrats who believe that breaking the glass ceiling there would be historic and important.

The President. Right.

Q. Are you annoyed by this sort of roiling debate? Do you find it any way unseemly? And do you believe this will be one of the most important—if not the most important—economic decisions you'll make in the remainder of your Presidency?

The President. It is definitely one of the most important economic decisions that I'll make in the remainder of my Presidency. The Federal Reserve Chairman is not just one of the most important economic policymakers in America, it's—he or she is one of the most important policymakers in the world. And that person presumably will stay on after I'm President. So this, along with Supreme Court appointments, is probably as important a decision as I make as President.

I have a range of outstanding candidates. You've mentioned two of them: Mr. Summers and Mr. Yellen—Ms. Yellen. And they're both terrific people.

I think the perception that Mr. Summers might have an inside track simply had to do with a bunch of attacks that I was hearing on Mr. Summers preemptively, which is sort of a standard Washington exercise that I don't like. Because when somebody has worked hard for me and worked hard on behalf of the American people, and I know the quality of those people, and I see them getting slapped around in the press for no reason—before they've even been nominated for anything—then I want to make

sure that somebody is standing up for them. I felt the same way when people were attacking Susan Rice before she was nominated for anything. So I tend to defend folks who I think have done a good job and don't deserve attacks.

But I consider them both outstanding candidates. My main criteria—I've stated this before, but I want to repeat it—my main criteria for the Fed Reserve Chairman is somebody who understands they've got a dual mandate. A critical part of the job is making sure that we keep inflation in check, that our monetary policy is sound, that the dollar is sound. Those are all critical components of the job. And we've seen what happens when the Fed's not paying attention. We saw, prior to Paul Volcker coming into place, inflation shooting up in ways that really damaged the real economy.

But the other mandate is full employment. And right now, if you look at the biggest challenges we have, the challenge is not inflation; the challenge is, we've still got too many people out of work, too many long-term unemployed, too much slack in the economy, and we're not growing as fast as we should. And so I want a Fed Chairman who's able to look at those issues and have a perspective that keeps an eye on inflation, makes sure that we're not seeing artificial bubbles in place, but also recognizes, you know what, a big part of my job right now is to make sure the economy is growing quickly and robustly and is sustained and durable so that people who work hard in this country are able to find a job.

And I—frankly, I think both Larry Summers and Janet Yellen are highly qualified candidates. There are a couple of other candidates who are highly qualified as well. I'll make the decision in the fall.

Q. Can you see how the perception of you defending Larry Summers as vigorously as you just did and in other quarters leads some to believe you've already made up your mind?

The President. Well, except I just told you I haven't. So, Major, I'd defend you if somebody was saying something that wasn't true about you. [*Laughter*] I really would. In fact, I've done that in the White House sometimes. [*Laughter*]

Carol Lee [Wall Street Journal]. And, Carol, congratulations on Hudson.

Q. Oh, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Do you have pictures?

Q. I do. I'll have to show you those. Yes.

The President. Okay, I'm going to have to see them. All right.

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. I appreciate you making it a slow news week. [*Laughter*]

I wanted to ask you about your evolution on the surveillance issues. I mean, part of what you're talking about today is restoring the public trust. And the public has seen you evolve from when you were in the U.S. Senate to now. And even as recently as June, you said that these—the process was such that people should be comfortable with it, and now you're saying you're making these reforms and people should be comfortable with those. So why should the public trust you on this issue? And why did you change your position multiple times?

The President. Well, I think it's important to say, Carol, first of all, I haven't evolved in my assessment of the actual programs. I consistently have said that when I came into office, I evaluated them. Some of these programs I had been critical of when I was in the Senate. When I looked through specifically what was being done, my determination was that the two programs in particular that had been at issue, 215 and 702, offered valuable intelligence that helps us protect the American people, and they're worth preserving. What we also saw was that some bolts needed to be tightened up on some of the programs, so we initiated some additional oversight, reforms, compliance officers, audits, and so forth.

And if you look at the reports—even the disclosures that Mr. Snowden has put forward—all the stories that have been written, what you're not reading about is the Government actually abusing these programs and listening in on people's phone calls or inappropriately

reading people's e-mails. What you're hearing about is the prospect that these could be abused. Now, part of the reason they're not abused is because these checks are in place and those abuses would be against the law and would be against the orders of the FISC.

Having said that, though, if you are outside of the intelligence community, if you are the ordinary person and you start seeing a bunch of headlines saying, U.S.—Big Brother looking down on you, collecting telephone records, et cetera, well, understandably, people would be concerned. I would be too if I wasn't inside the Government.

And so in light of the changed environment where a whole set of questions have been raised, some in the most sensationalized manner possible, where these leaks are released, drip by drip, one a week, to kind of maximize attention and see if they can catch us at some imprecision on something; in light of that, it makes sense for us to go ahead, lay out what exactly we're doing, have a discussion with Congress, have a discussion with industry—which is also impacted by this—have a discussion with civil libertarians and see, can we do this better?

I think the main thing I want to emphasize is, I don't have an interest and the people at the NSA don't have an interest in doing anything other than making sure that where we can prevent a terrorist attack, where we can get information ahead of time, that we're able to carry out that critical task. We do not have an interest in doing anything other than that. And we've tried to set up a system that is as failsafe as so far at least we've been able to think of to make sure that these programs are not abused.

But people may have better ideas, and people may want to jigger slightly, sort of, the balance between the information that we can get versus the incremental encroachments on privacy that, if haven't already taken place, might take place in a future administration or as technologies develop further.

And the other thing that's happening is, is that as technology develops further, technology itself may provide us some additional safeguards. So, for example, if people don't have confidence that the law, the checks and balances of the court and Congress, are sufficient to give us confidence that Government's not snooping, well, maybe we can embed technologies in there that prevent the snooping regardless of what Government wants to do. I mean, there may be some technological fixes that provide another layer of assurance.

And so those are the kinds of things that I'm looking forward to having a conversation about.

Q. Can you understand, though, why some people might not trust what you're saying right now about wanting to—[*inaudible*].

The President. No, I can't.

Q. ——that they should be comfortable with the process?

The President. Well, the fact that I said that the programs are operating in a way that prevents abuse, that continues to be true, without the reforms. The question is, how do I make the American people more comfortable? All right?

If I tell Michelle that I did the dishes—now, granted, in the White House, I don't do the dishes that much—[*laughter*]—but back in the day—and she's a little skeptical, well, I'd like her to trust me, but maybe I need to bring her back and show her the dishes and not just have her take my word for it.

And so the program is—I am comfortable that the program currently is not being abused. I'm comfortable that if the American people examined exactly what was taking place, how it was being used, what the safeguards were, that they would say, you know what, these folks are following the law and doing what they say they're doing.

But it is absolutely true that with the expansion of technology—this is an area that's moving very quickly—with the revelations that have depleted public trust, that if there are some additional things that we can do to build that trust back up, then we should do them.

Jonathan Karl [ABC News].

Al Qaida Terrorist Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You have said that core Al Qaida has been decimated, that its

leaders are on the run. Now that we've seen this terror threat that has resulted in Embassies closed throughout the Arab world, much of Africa, do you still believe that Al Qaida has been decimated? And if I can ask in the interest of transparency, can you tell us about these drone strikes that we've seen over the last couple of weeks in Yemen?

The President. What I said in the same National Defense University speech back in May that I referred to earlier is that core Al Qaida is on its heels, has been decimated. But what I also said was that Al Qaida and other extremists have metastasized into regional groups that can pose significant dangers.

And I'd refer you back to that speech just back in May, where I said specifically that although they are less likely to be able to carry out spectacular homeland attacks like 9/11, they have the capacity to go after our Embassies. They have the capacity, potentially, to go after our businesses. They have the capacity to be destabilizing and disruptive in countries where the security apparatus is weak. And that's exactly what we are seeing right now.

So it's entirely consistent to say that this tightly organized and relatively centralized Al Qaida that attacked us on 9/11 has been broken apart and is very weak and does not have a lot of operational capacity and to say we still have these regional organizations like AQAP that can pose a threat, that can drive potentially a truck bomb into an Embassy wall and can kill some people.

And so that requires us then to make sure that we have a strategy that is strengthening those partners so that they've got their own capacity to deal with what are potentially manageable regional threats if these countries are a little bit stronger and have more effective CT and so forth. It means that we've got to continue to be vigilant and go after known terrorists who are potentially carrying out plots or are going to strengthen their capacity over time, because they're always testing the boundaries of, well, maybe we can try this, maybe we can do that.

But this is a ongoing process. We are not going to completely eliminate terrorism. What we can do is to weaken it and to strengthen our partnerships in such a way that it does not pose the kind of horrible threat that we saw on 9/11.

And I'm not going to discuss specific operations that have taken place. Again, in my speech in May, I was very specific about how we make these determinations about potential lethal strikes, so I would refer you to that speech.

Q. So you won't even confirm that we carried out drone strikes in Yemen?

The President. I will not have a discussion about operational issues.

Ed Henry [Fox News].

Q. I hope you would defend me as well.

The President. I would.

2012 Attack on the U.S. Mission in Benghazi, Libya/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Okay, thank you. I want to ask you about two important dates that are coming up. October 1, you've got to implement your signature health care law. You recently decided on your own to delay a key part of that. And I wonder, if you pick and choose what parts of the law to implement, couldn't your successor down the road pick and choose whether they'll implement your law and keep it in place?

And on September 11, we'll have the first anniversary of Benghazi. And you said on September 12, "Make no mistake, we'll bring to justice the killers who attacked our people."

The President. Yes.

Q. Eleven months later, where are they, sir?

The President. Well, I also said that we'd get bin Laden, and I didn't get him in 11 months. So we have informed, I think, the public that there's a sealed indictment. It's sealed for a reason. But we are intent on capturing those who carried out this attack, and we're going to stay on it until we get them.

Q. And you're close to having suspects in custody?

The President. I will leave it at that. But this remains a top priority for us. Anybody who attacks Americans, anybody who kills, tragically, four Americans who were serving us in a very dangerous place, we're going to do everything

we can to get those who carried out those attacks.

With respect to health care, I didn't simply choose to delay this on my own. This was in consultation with businesses all across the country, many of whom are supportive of the Affordable Care Act, but—and who—many of whom, by the way, are already providing health insurance to their employees but were concerned about the operational details of changing their HR operations, if they've got a lot of employees, which could be costly for them, and them suggesting that there may be easier ways to do this.

Now, what's true, Ed, is, is that in a normal political environment, it would have been easier for me to simply call up the Speaker and say, you know what, this is a tweak that doesn't go to the essence of the law—it has to do with, for example, are we able to simplify the attestation of employers as to whether they're already providing health insurance or not—it looks like there may be some better ways to do this; let's make a technical change to the law. That would be the normal thing that I would prefer to do.

But we're not in a normal atmosphere around here when it comes to, quote, unquote, "Obamacare." We did have the executive authority to do so, and we did so. But this doesn't go to the core of implementation. Let me tell you what is the core of implementation that's already taken place. As we speak, right now, for the 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, they are benefiting from being able to keep their kid on their plan if their kid is 26 or younger. That's benefiting millions of young people around the country, which is why lack of insurance among young people has actually gone down. That's in large part attributable to the steps that we've taken.

You've got millions of people who have received rebates, because part of the Affordable Care Act was to say that if insurance company isn't spending 80 percent of your premium on your health care, you get some money back. And lo and behold, people have been getting their money back. It means that folks who have been bumping up with lifetime limits on their insurance, that it leaves them vulnerable. That doesn't exist.

Seniors have been getting discounts on their prescription drugs. That's happening right now. Free preventive care: mammograms, contraception. That's happening right now. I met a young man today on a bill signing I was doing with the student loan bill who came up to me and said thank you—he couldn't have been more than 25, 26 years old—thank you; I have cancer, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, working with the California program, I was able to get health care, and I'm now in remission. And so right now people are already benefiting.

Now, what happens on October 1, in 53 days, is for the remaining 15 percent of the population that doesn't have health insurance, they're going to be able to go on a website or call up a call center and sign up for affordable, quality health insurance at a significantly cheaper rate than what they can get right now on the individual market. And if even with lower premiums they still can't afford it, we're going to be able to provide them with a tax credit to help them buy it. And between October 1, into March, there will be an open enrollment period in which millions of Americans for the first time are going to be able to get affordable health care.

Now, I think the really interesting question is, why it is that my friends in the other party have made the idea of preventing these people from getting health care their holy grail, their number-one priority? The one unifying principle in the Republican Party at the moment is making sure that 30 million people don't have health care and, presumably, repealing all those benefits I just mentioned: kids staying on their parent's plan; seniors getting discounts on their prescription drugs; I guess a return to lifetime limits on insurance; people with preexisting conditions continuing to be blocked from being able to get health insurance.

That's hard to understand as an agenda that is going to strengthen our middle class. At least they used to say, well, we're going to replace it with something better. There's not even a pre-

tense now that they're going to replace it with something better.

Q. So it sounds like——

The President. The notion is simply that those 30 million people, or the 150 million who are benefiting from the other aspects of Affordable Care, will be better off without it. That's their assertion, not backed by fact, not backed by any evidence. It's just become an ideological fixation.

Well, I tell you what: They're wrong about that. There is no doubt that in implementing the Affordable Care Act, a program of this significance, there are going to be some glitches. No doubt about it. There are going to be things where we say, you know what, we should have thought of that earlier. Or this would work a little bit better. Or this needs an adjustment. That was true of Social Security. That was true of Medicare. That was true of the Children's Health Insurance Program. That was true of the prescription drug program, Part D, that was rolled out by a Republican President and supported by Republicans who are still in the House of Representatives. That's true, by the way, of a car company rolling out a new car. It's true of Apple rolling out the new iPad.

So you will be able to, whenever you want during the course of the next 6 months and probably the next year, find occasions where you say: "Aha, you know what, that could have been done a little bit better." Or, "That thing, they're kind of making an administrative change; that's not how it was originally thought this thing was going to work." Yes, exactly. Because our goal is to actually deliver high-quality, affordable health care for people and to reform the system so costs start going down and people getting—start getting a better bang for the buck. And I make no apologies for that.

And let me just make one last point about this. The idea that you would shut down the Government unless you prevent 30 million people from getting health care is a bad idea. What you should be thinking about is, how can we advance and improve ways for middle class families to have some security so that if they work hard, they can get ahead, and their kids can get ahead.

Jessica Yellin [CNN].

Federal Government Shutdown/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. And following on what you just said, Republicans in the House might give you that choice soon to either allow the Government to shut down or see Obamacare defunded. Would you choose to let the Government shut down to ensure that Obamacare remains funded?

The President. Well, I'm not going to engage in hypotheticals. I can tell you that the American people would have difficulty understanding why we would weaken our economy, shut down our Government, shut down vital services, have people who are not getting paid who then can't go to restaurants or shop for clothes or all the other things that we're doing here, because Republicans have determined that they don't want to see these folks get health care.

Again, they used to say they had a replacement. That never actually arrived, right? I mean, I've been hearing about this whole replace thing for 2 years; now I just don't hear about it, because basically, they don't have an agenda to provide health insurance to people at affordable rates. And the idea that you would shut down the Government at a time when the recovery is getting some traction; where we're growing, although not as fast as we need to; where the housing market is recovering, although not as fast as we would like; that we would precipitate another crisis here in Washington that no economist thinks is a good idea—I'm assuming that they will not take that path. I have confidence that common sense, in the end, will prevail.

Q. And if they do, sir, you will have to make that choice?

The President. We'll see what happens. We've got a couple of months.

Federal Budget

Q. When's the last time you spoke to Speaker Boehner about the budget?

The President. Fairly recently, yes. Probably right before they left.

Okay. Scott Horsley [NPR].

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Part of the political logic behind immigration reform was the strong showing by Latino voters last November.

The President. Yes.

Q. That doesn't seem to resonate with a lot of House Republicans who represent overwhelmingly White districts. What other political leverage can you bring to bear to help move a bill in the House?

The President. Well, we've got an economic report that shows that our economy would be a trillion dollars stronger if we get immigration reform done. We've got evidence that our housing market would be stronger if immigrants are in a situation in which, having paid a fine, having paid back taxes, that they now have the ability to actually enter into the housing market. We've got strong evidence that our technological and research edge would be better if we get immigration reform done.

We know that the Senate bill strengthens border security, puts unprecedented resources on top of the unprecedented resources I've already put into border security. So if your main priority is border security, I'd think you'd want to vote for this bill. We know that the Senate bill creates a system in which employers are held accountable for when they hire undocumented workers. This is something that people say is a bad thing. I agree. Let's make sure that that system for holding employers accountable is in place.

So when I hear the opposition to immigration reform, I just run through the list of things they're concerned about, I look at what the Senate bill does, and I say to myself, you know what, the Senate bill actually improves the situation on every issue that they say they're concerned about.

Now, what they may argue is, it doesn't solve the problem a hundred percent. I don't know a law that solves a problem a hundred percent. Social Security lifted millions of seniors out of poverty, but there are still some poor seniors. The Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act drastically reduced discrimination in America, but there's still discrimination. That doesn't make them bad laws; it just means that there are very few human problems that are a hundred percent solvable.

So what I see right now is a strong bipartisan vote coming out of the Senate. I think that the Speaker and others have said they need to do something, and I'd urge, when they get back, to do something. Put forward a bill that has an opportunity to actually pass. It may not be precisely what's in the Senate bill. My preference would be for them to go ahead and call the Senate bill. But if they've got some additional ideas, I think the Senate is happy to consider them. And get that bill on the floor, put it up for a vote.

I am absolutely certain that the votes for the Senate bill, which strengthens border security, demands responsibility from undocumented workers to pay a fine—pay a penalty and get to the back of the line, reforms our legal immigration system, holds employers accountable, I am absolutely confident that if that bill was on the floor of the House, it would pass.

So the challenge right now is not that there aren't a majority of House Members, just like a majority of Senate Members, who aren't prepared to support this bill. The problem is internal Republican caucus politics. And that's what the American people don't want us to be worrying about. Don't worry about your Washington politics, solve problems.

And this is one where you've actually got some pretty broad consensus. I don't know an issue where you've got labor, the Chamber of Commerce, evangelicals, student groups, you name it, supportive of a bill. Let's get it done, all right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:09 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to former National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers; National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, in her former capacity

as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations; Hudson A. Lee, son of Wall Street Journal reporter Carol E. Lee; and former President George W. Bush. He also referred to the Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) terrorist organization. A reporter referred to White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney.

The President's Weekly Address
August 10, 2013

For the past few weeks, I've been visiting folks across America to talk about what we need to do as a country to secure a better bargain for the middle class.

I've been laying out my ideas for how we can build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America: a good job, a good education, affordable health care when you get sick, a secure retirement even if you're not rich, and the chance to own your own home.

This week, I went to Arizona and California, two of the States hit hardest when the housing bubble burst, triggering the recession. All across the country, millions of responsible Americans were hurt badly by the reckless actions of others: Home values plummeted, construction workers were laid off, and many families lost their homes.

Over the past 4 years, we've worked to help millions of responsible homeowners get back on their feet. And while we're not where we need to be yet, our housing market is beginning to heal. Housing prices and sales are rising. Construction is up. Foreclosures are down. Millions of families have come up for air because they're no longer underwater on their mortgages.

Now we have to build on this progress. Congress should give every American the chance to refinance at today's low rates. We should help more qualified families get a mortgage and buy their first home. We should get construction workers back on the job rebuilding communities hit hardest by the crisis. And we should make sure that folks who don't want to buy a home have a decent, affordable place to rent.

As home prices rise, we have to turn the page on the bubble-and-burst mentality that created this mess and build a housing system that's rock solid and rewards responsibility for generations to come. That means winding down the companies known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, making sure private capital plays a bigger role in the mortgage market, and ending the era of expecting a bailout after your pursuit of profit puts the whole country at risk. We need to preserve access to safe and simple mortgages like the 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage. We need to keep laying down rules of the road that protect homeowners when they're making the biggest purchase of their lives. And finally, Congress needs to confirm Mel Watt to be our Nation's top housing regulator so that he can protect consumers and help responsible lenders provide credit.

No program or policy will solve all the problems of a multitrillion-dollar housing market, and it will take time to fully recover. But if we work together, we can make a home a source of pride and middle class security again. And if Washington is willing to set aside politics and focus on what really matters, we can rebuild an economy where if you work hard, you can get ahead.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:35 p.m. on August 9 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on August 10. In the address, the President referred to Rep. Melvin L. Watt in his capacity as Director-designate of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 9, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 10.

Remarks to the Disabled American Veterans National Convention in Orlando, Florida

August 10, 2013

Hello, DAV! Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Do we have an extraordinary First Lady? So I—we will be celebrating our 21st anniversary in October. The first time I saw her, I knew she was something special. [*Laughter*] She was a little more skeptical about me. [*Laughter*] But persistence is the key. You just got to stay on it. Eventually, you can marry up. [*Laughter*]

To Michelle and Jill Biden and Joining Forces, we are so proud of the work you've done to help rally America around military families and veterans. I'm inspired by what they are doing. So thank you, Michelle, for your extraordinary work.

DAV, I was proud to join at your convention 3 years ago. It is wonderful to be back. I want to thank your national commander. Larry Polzin, thank you so much to the entire leadership team, Joe Johnston, Marc Burgess, Donna Adams; all the incredible spouses and families of the DAV Auxiliary. I want to thank Barry Jenichoski—Jesinoski. [*Laughter*] I've got it. [*Laughter*] They used to mispronounce Obama too. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Barry and your great team in Washington.

Disabled American Veterans, like all veterans, you carry in your hearts the story of brave service that took you to every corner of the Earth. As young men and women, you left home, left everything and everyone you ever knew because storm clouds gathered far across the sea. You had your whole lives ahead of you, but you were willing to risk all of it for this land that we love. Because you know, from hard experience, what we must never forget: Our country endures because in every generation there are Americans like you who stand beside her and guide her and protect her.

You fought across the Pacific, island by island. You fought into the heart of Europe, mile by mile, freeing millions from fascism. That's your legacy as veterans of the Second World War. You held the line at the Pusan Perimeter and survived the bitter cold of the Chosin Reservoir. And on this 60th anniversary of the end of that war, we salute all of our veterans of the Korean war.

To our Vietnam veterans, you served with valor not just in the thick of the jungle, but through intense urban combat. And let it be remembered that you won every major battle that you fought in. And so in the decades since, whenever our country has needed you, you said, "Send me"—from the sands of Desert Storm to the mountains of the Balkans to the villages of Afghanistan and Iraq. And next year, your profound sacrifice will be recognized in the heart of our Nation's Capital when our country dedicates the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

That memorial will honor your courage in war. But it will also pay tribute to your bravery in the other battle you have fought: the fight to recover from the wounds of war. And this may be your greatest triumph of all. Because rather than being defined by what you lost, by what you can't do, you've inspired America with what you can do.

And maybe you lost your sight, but you can still see the truth that our disabled veterans make extraordinary contributions to our country every single day. Maybe you lost an arm, but you still have the strength to pick up a friend or neighbor in need. Maybe you lost a leg, but you still stand tall for the values and freedoms that make America the greatest Nation on Earth.

I think of the wounded warrior who spoke for so many of you when he said, "Your life will never be the same, but that doesn't mean you can't go on to do amazing things with the second chance you were given." I think of wounded warriors across America and how they've used that second chance: volunteering in communities; building homes; being a mentor to local kids; showing up after tornadoes, after Hurricane Sandy, to help folks rebuild. I think of the wounded warriors who reached out to the survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing

with the example of their own recovery and with a simple message: "We stand with you."

I think of all the inspiring wounded warriors that Michelle and I have met: their resilience, their resolve, their determination to push through and to carry on. That's the fighting spirit of our wounded warriors. That's the spirit of DAV, dedicated not just to your own recovery, but to taking care of each other. Every day, you work to ensure that America is fulfilling its promises to our men and women who have served. That's your mission. And I want you to know it is my mission too.

I believe that this work is more important than ever, because this time of war that we've been in is coming to an end. For nearly 12 years—ever since we were attacked on that clear September morning—our Nation has been at war. Our fight in Afghanistan is now America's longest war. At the same time, our troops fought courageously in Iraq for 9 long years. And among us today are proud veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Now we've marked another milestone in Afghanistan: As of this past June, Afghan forces have taken the lead for security across their entire country. So instead of leading the fight, our troops now have a different mission: supporting Afghan forces. Our war in Afghanistan has entered the final chapter. More of our troops are coming home. This winter, we'll be down to 34,000. By the end of next year, the transition will be complete. Afghans will take full responsibility for their security, and our war in Afghanistan will be over.

For this progress, we thank all who have served in Afghanistan, including DAV members here today. Just a few I want to mention. We salute folks like Timothy Duke. Where's Timothy? Right here. In the early days of the war, Timothy's helicopter unit served in some of the most remote parts of Afghanistan. On another tour, in Iraq, his convoy was hit by an IED. He endured three spinal surgeries. Then he went to school on the post-9/11 GIbill. Today, he is helping at the DAV, helping veterans and their families access their benefits. That's the kind of spirit the DAV represents. Thank you, Timothy, for your outstanding service and work.

We salute Staff Sergeant Jacare Hogan. Where's Jacare? In Iraq, she was hit by IEDs three times. She's endured surgeries, rehab—which continue to this day—but she refused to stop serving. She deployed again to Afghanistan. As a logistics specialist, she served at forward operating bases, keeping them running, flying between bases, getting shot at along the way. At those remote outposts, she was often the only woman on base. She proudly wears the Combat Action Badge. But her service hasn't stopped. So here at DAV, she counsels others as they recover. "Helping [the]* troops is what I'm about." That's what she says. And we are grateful to you, Jacare, for your extraordinary service.

And we salute Jason Hassinger. Where is Jason? Right here. When Jason's unit was ambushed and pinned down, he was hit five times in the chest. But he pushed on, helped lead his men to safety, for which he earned the Silver Star. After months of care and rehab, he returned to his unit: going out on patrol, gritting his teeth through the pain in his chest. And today, at DAV, Jason helps his fellow vets access the benefits that they have earned. It is "my job" to "help people heal." That's what Jason says. Thank you.

So Timothy, Jacare, Jason, they're just examples of all who have served in these years of war, the 9/11 generation. And now you're beginning the next chapter in your lives wearing a proud new title: veteran of the United States Armed Forces. So this time of war may be coming to an end, but the job of caring for our veterans goes on, and our work caring for our newest veterans has only just begun.

I mean, think about it: We lost the last veteran of the First World War 2 years ago, but we still care for the children of our World War I veterans. To this day, we still help care for children of men who fought in the Spanish-American War, even the daughter of a Civil War veteran. So when we talk about fulfilling our

* White House correction.

promises to all who serve, we're not just talking about a few years, we're talking about decades, for as long as you and your families walk this Earth.

With a new generation joining your ranks, I believe that now is the time to make sure our Nation is truly ready: organized and structured to get this right: not just for this year, not just for next year, but for decades to come; not just for the veterans of today's wars, but for all wars. And I believe we need to focus on five key priorities.

Number one, we need to make sure we've got the resources, the budgets our veterans deserve. Since I took office, we've made historic investments in our veterans. Even in these tough fiscal times, we've boosted the VA budget by more than 40 percent. We now budget for veterans health care a year in advance. And I've proposed a further increase in veterans funding for next year.

Now, some of you may be aware, right now we've got these reckless, across-the-board budget cuts called the sequester that's hitting a lot of folks hard. And it's cost jobs. It's hurting our military, slashing investments in education and science and medical research. I made it clear that your veterans benefits are exempt from this year's sequester. I've made that clear. But I want to tell you: Going forward, the best way to protect the VA care you have earned is to get rid of this sequester altogether. Congress needs to come together and agree on a responsible plan that reduces our deficits and keeps our promises to our veterans and keeps our promises to future generations. That's what I'm fighting for. That's what you deserve.

Number two, we need to make sure you're getting the veterans health care you've been promised. We're already making record investments: more outreach, more clinics, more service. For our Vietnam vets, we made sure that you and your families finally got the disability pay you deserve because of your exposure to agent orange. For our Desert Storm veterans, we made it easier for you to get the care you need for illnesses connected to your service. For our veterans with PTSD, we made it easier for you to get the VA care you need as well, regardless of the war that you served in.

For our women's veterans—and there are more of you than ever—we're offering more tailored care, more clinics just for women, more clinicians trained to treat you with respect and dignity. So all told, we've made VA health care available to more than 2 million veterans who didn't have it before.

I've proposed more funding for prosthetics for our disabled vets to help you work and walk and run again. And for you—the caregivers and families—we're going to keep empowering you with the skills and support you need as you care for the veterans that you love.

We also need to keep improving mental health services, because we've got to end this epidemic of suicide among our veterans and troops. Last year, I said this had to be an all-hands-on-deck approach, not just at DOD and the VA, but across our Government. I issued an Executive order to step up our game, and we have—hiring more counselors, hiring more mental health providers, new awareness campaigns—so that those who are hurting know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, it's a part of staying strong, it's a part of getting back up. Hundreds of medical and nursing schools have committed to improving research and care for our veterans and their families. And I've proposed more funding for mental health. We can't just promise better care, we've actually got to deliver better care.

So today I'm proud to announce the next step in this fight. We're unveiling a new national action plan to guide mental health research across government, industry, and academia, so that we're going to focus on developing more effective ways to prevent, diagnose, and treat mental health conditions like TBI and PTSD. And to get it done, we're moving ahead with more than $100 million in new research. So I'm not going to be satisfied until every veteran and every man and woman in uniform gets the support and the help they need to stay strong.

Now, on the subject of veterans health care, you may have noticed there's still a lot of misinformation out there about the new health care law, Affordable Care Act. Some folks are

out there trying to scare people, including veterans. So let me say this as plainly as I can. If you already have health insurance or health care from the VA, you do not have to do a thing. Your VA health care does not change. It is safe. There are no new fees. Don't let them hoodwink you.

But the good news is, if you're among one of the more than 1 million veterans who don't have health insurance, starting October 1, you'll have a new option. Online marketplaces will let you shop and compare and buy private health insurance plans, just like you can go online to compare prices when you buy a TV or airplane ticket or a car. And because of the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies will no longer be able to discriminate against you or deny you coverage because of preexisting conditions like PTSD. So you'll have more security in being able to get health insurance. So don't let them fool you. No one is taking away your benefits. Your veterans health care is safe. We're not reducing veterans access to health care, we're expanding it. That's the truth.

And that leads me to the third priority we've got to focus on. We've got to attack this claims backlog. Now, the last time I was with you, I pledged to cut the backlog, slash those wait times, deliver your benefits sooner. And I'm going to be honest with you: It has not moved as fast as I wanted. Part of it is all these new veterans in the system who came in: agent orange, PTSD. It means a lot more claims, and despite additional resources, it's resulted in longer waits. And that's been unacceptable: unacceptable to me, unacceptable to Secretary Shinseki.

So we put more of our VA folks to work as claims processors, we hired more claims processors as well. We've got them working overtime, completing more than a million claims a year. We prioritized the oldest claims. Veterans groups like the DAV have pitched in as well, helping vets with their claims, getting them ready so when they bring them, they're in better shape, and they can move a little quicker. And today I can report that we are not where we need to be, but we're making progress. [*Applause*] We are making progress. So after years when the backlog kept growing, finally the backlog is shrinking. In the last 5 months alone, it's down nearly 20 percent. We're turning the tide.

And we're not going to let up until we eliminate the backlog once and for all. And we'll keep moving ahead with paperless systems so the backlog doesn't come back and so your claims are processed right the first time, on time. After years of military service, you shouldn't have to wait for years for the benefits you have earned.

Fourth, just like you fought to defend our rights and freedoms, we need to uphold the dignity and rights of every veteran. And that starts by keeping up our campaign to end homelessness among veterans. We're not just bringing our veterans off the streets, we're doing more to reach at-risk and low-income vets so they don't become homeless in the first place. And we're not going to rest until every veteran who has fought for America has a home in America.

Yesterday I was proud to sign into law the Helping Heroes Fly Act, to end those intrusive airport screenings so you—our wounded warriors and disabled vets, especially those of you with prosthetics—can travel with dignity. And I know how disappointing it was last year when the Senate failed to approve the Disabilities Treaty despite the fact that we had a former Senator and World War II veteran, Bob Dole, in the Senate Chamber. But we're going to keep fighting to ratify that treaty, because the United States has always been a leader for the rights of the disabled. We believe that disabled Americans like you deserve the same opportunities to work and to study and to travel in other countries as any other American. It's the right thing to do. We need to get it done.

Which brings me to the final priority we need to stay focused on, and that's making sure that our veterans have every opportunity to pursue the American Dream, starting with the education and jobs worthy of your extraordinary talents.

With our new transition assistance program, we're doing more to help departing servicemembers and their spouses plan their careers

and find that new job. We're going to keep helping our newest veterans and their families pursue their education under the post-9/11 GI bill. We're building on the Executive order I issued last year to protect you as you go looking for schools. I said we're going to stand up against dishonest recruiting and predatory practices that target our veterans. So we set new standards. And so far, more than 6,000 schools across the country have signed on and pledged to do right by you and your families. We don't want our veterans cheated.

I also said that schools need to step up their support so we're doing more to help our veterans succeed on campus. So today we're announcing what we call 8 Keys to Success, specific steps that schools can take to truly welcome and encourage our veterans. And so far, more than 250 community colleges and universities have signed on, and today I'm calling on schools across America to join us in this effort. Let's help our veterans get that degree, get that credential, and compete for the high-skilled jobs of tomorrow.

Now, I'm also going to make sure that the Federal Government keeps doing its part. I'm very proud of the fact that, since I took office, Federal departments and agencies have hired nearly 300,000 veterans, including many disabled veterans. And I'm going to keep calling on Congress to pass the veterans job corps to put our veterans to work protecting and rebuilding America.

And we're also doing everything we can to help you get those private sector jobs: more help with job searches, more tools like our online jobs bank to connect veterans to jobs that are open right now, making it easier for you to transfer your skills to the licenses and credentials you need for civilian jobs. And because tens of thousands of our veterans have already been helped, Congress needs to make permanent tax credits for companies that hire our veterans and wounded warriors. It's the right thing to do.

And we're going to keep urging companies across America to do the smart thing: hire some of the best workers you'll ever find; hire a vet. Michelle and Jill have done great work on this. And responding to our challenge, working with Joining Forces, America's businesses have already hired or trained 290,000 veterans and military spouses, and they've committed to hiring over 400,000 more. More companies are signing up all the time. We are going to get companies to understand that you can't get a better deal than hiring a veteran.

Because of all the efforts I've described and because of a growing economy, veterans unemployment is going down, more veterans are finding jobs, and we're going to keep at this. Because with your skills and drive, we don't just want you fighting for America overseas, we want you to be right here, building a stronger America, fighting for a better future for our kids.

So ensuring the resources and budgets you deserve, delivering on the health care that you've earned, making sure you can count on it, continuing to reduce the backlog, standing up for your rights and dignity, creating jobs and opportunities so you can realize your dreams—that's what I'm focused on. That's what I have told my entire administration to be focused on. That's what our country needs to stay focused for the many years to come.

And nobody knows this better than you, our disabled veterans. The road of recovery is often such a long haul. And America needs to be there for you during that long haul. And that's the lesson of the extraordinary young man I told you about when I spoke to you 3 years ago, an Army Ranger, Sergeant First Class Cory Remsburg.

A massive IED in Afghanistan nearly killed him. He was in a coma for months with severe traumatic brain injury. And I told you then how, when I saw him in the hospital, he had come out of the coma, but he still couldn't speak. And when I asked him how he was feeling, he slowly brought his hand up, and he pulled his fingers together, and he gave a thumbs up. His mom was sitting there with him.

A few days ago, I saw Cory and his family again, this time in Phoenix, where they live. So I wanted to give you an update on how he's doing. I won't—I suspect it won't surprise you to know that for Cory, the years since he was in-

jured have been very hard: brain surgeries, half a dozen of them; surgeries to replace part of his skull; eye surgeries; special procedures on his lungs; skin grafts, skin flaps. All told, dozens of surgeries and procedures.

Rehab has been grueling. On a typical day, Cory wakes up and spends hours in therapy: physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy. So progress has come slowly, but it has come. He had to learn the simple things all over again: how to speak, how to write his name, how to throw a ball. And this past spring, he reached another milestone. After years in the hospital and rehab facilities, he finally came home, greeted by hundreds of neighbors and friends waving American flags.

And so when I saw Cory a few days ago, he is still blind in one eye. He still struggles to move his left side. But the young man I had seen in that hospital bed unable to speak, barely able to move, this time he was in a chair sitting up, alert, smiling, talking. And then, he wanted to show me something. And he leaned out of his chair. And he reached out, and he grabbed his walker. And with the help of his parents, he pulled himself forward, and he stood up. And he looked at me, and he gave me a sharp salute. And he said, "Rangers lead the way."

And his stepmom held one arm for balance, and I held the other. And then, Cory took a step, then another, and then another one after that, all the way across the room. Little by little, Cory is learning to walk again. And he's starting to get good on his recumbent bike. He hopes to bike in a race this fall, 42 miles. He's scheduled to move into his own home, adapted to his needs with the help of a caregiver, another step towards the greater independence he seeks. And so Cory says: "My recovery has not been easy. Nothing in life that's worth anything is easy." But he says, I don't "give up." I don't give up.

The war in Afghanistan may be ending, but for Cory and our disabled vets, the work has only just begun. Cory is 30 years old. His recovery, like so many of yours, will last a lifetime. But he won't give up, because you haven't given up. And when it comes to our work, to making sure that our Nation is fulfilling its promises to the men and women who served and sacrificed, America cannot give up either. I will not give up. We cannot give up.

So long as I'm the United States President, I will make it my mission to make sure that America is right there beside you every step of the way, every step with Cory, every step with the DAV. God bless you. God bless our veterans. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12 p.m. in the ballroom of the Hilton Orlando hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; Larry A. Polzin, chairman of the board of directors, Joseph W. Johnston, national commander, J. Marc Burgess, secretary of the board of directors, Donna M. Adams, auxiliary national commander, Barry A. Jesinoski, executive director of the Washington, DC, headquarters, and Timothy Duke, national service officer, Disabled American Veterans; S. Sgt. Jacare Hogan, USA; Cpl. Jason M. Hassinger, USMC; Juanita Tudor Lowrey, daughter of Civil War veteran Hugh Tudor; and Karen Petersen, mother, Ken Remsburg, father, and Anne Remsburg, stepmother, of S. Sgt. Cory Remsburg. He also referred to H.R. 1344, which was approved August 9 and assigned Public Law No. 113–27. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks on the Situation in Egypt From Chilmark, Massachusetts
August 15, 2013

Good morning, everybody. I just finished a discussion with my national security team about the situation in Egypt, and I wanted to provide an update about our response to the events of the last several days.

Let me begin by stepping back for a moment. The relationship between the United States and Egypt goes back decades. It's rooted in our respect of Egypt as a nation, an ancient center of civilization, and a cornerstone

for peace in the Middle East. It's also rooted in our ties to the Egyptian people, forged through a longstanding partnership.

Just over 2 years ago, America was inspired by the Egyptians people desire for change, as millions of Egyptians took to the streets to defend their dignity and demand a government that was responsive to their aspirations for political freedom and economic opportunity. And we said at the time that change would not come quickly or easily, but we did align ourselves with a set of principles: nonviolence, a respect for universal rights, and a process for political and economic reform. In doing so, we were guided by values, but also by interests, because we believe nations are more stable and more successful when they're guided by those principles as well.

And that's why we're so concerned by recent events. We appreciate the complexity of the situation. While Muhammad Mursi was elected President in a democratic election, his Government was not inclusive and did not respect the views of all Egyptians. We know that many Egyptians—millions of Egyptians, perhaps even a majority of Egyptians—were calling for a change in course. And while we do not believe that force is the way to resolve political differences, after the military's intervention several weeks ago, there remained a chance for reconciliation and an opportunity to pursue a democratic path.

Instead, we've seen a more dangerous path taken through arbitrary arrests, a broad crackdown on Mr. Mursi's associations and supporters, and now, tragically, violence that's taken the lives of hundreds of people and wounded thousands more.

The United States strongly condemns the steps that have been taken by Egypt's interim Government and security forces. We deplore violence against civilians. We support universal rights essential to human dignity, including the right to peaceful protest. We oppose the pursuit of martial law, which denies those rights to citizens under the principle that security trumps individual freedom or that might makes right. And today the United States extends its condolences to the families of those who were killed and those who were wounded.

And given the depths of our partnership with Egypt, our national security interests in this pivotal part of the world, and our belief that engagement can support a transition back to a democratically elected civilian government, we've sustained our commitment to Egypt and its people. But while we want to sustain our relationship with Egypt, our traditional cooperation cannot continue as usual when civilians are being killed in the streets and rights are being rolled back.

As a result, this morning we notified the Egyptian Government that we are canceling our biannual joint military exercise which was scheduled for next month. Going forward, I've asked my national security team to assess the implications of the actions taken by the interim Government and further steps that we may take, as necessary, with respect to the U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

Let me say that the Egyptian people deserve better than what we've seen over the last several days. And to the Egyptian people, let me say the cycle of violence and escalation needs to stop. We call on the Egyptian authorities to respect the universal rights of the people. We call on those who are protesting to do so peacefully and condemn the attacks that we've seen by protesters, including on churches. We believe that the state of emergency should be lifted, that a process of national reconciliation should begin, that all parties need to have a voice in Egypt's future, that the rights of women and religious minorities should be respected, and that commitments must be kept to pursue transparent reforms of the Constitution and democratic elections of a Parliament and a President.

Pursuing that path will help Egypt meet the democratic aspirations of its people, while attracting the investment, tourism, and international support that can help it deliver opportunities to its citizens. Violence, on the other hand, will only feed the cycle of polarization that isolates Egyptians from one another and from the world and that continues to hamper

the opportunity for Egypt to get back on the path of economic growth.

Let me make one final point: America cannot determine the future of Egypt. That's a task for the Egyptian people. We don't take sides with any particular party or political figure. I know it's tempting inside of Egypt to blame the United States or the West or some other outside actor for what's gone wrong. We've been blamed by supporters of Mursi. We've been blamed by the other side, as if we are supporters of Mursi. That kind of approach will do nothing to help Egyptians achieve the future that they deserve.

We want Egypt to succeed. We want a peaceful, democratic, prosperous Egypt. That's our interest. But to achieve that, the Egyptians are going to have to do the work.

We recognize that change takes time and that a process like this is never guaranteed. There are examples in recent history of countries that are transitioned out of a military government towards a democratic government, and it did not always go in a straight line, and the process was not always smooth. There are going to be false starts. There will be difficult days. America's democratic journey took us through some mighty struggles to perfect our Union.

From Asia to the Americas, we know that democratic transitions are measured not in months or even years, but sometimes in generations. So in the spirit of mutual interest and mutual respect, I want to be clear that America wants to be a partner in the Egyptian people's pursuit of a better future, and we are guided by our national interest in this longstanding relationship. But our partnership must also advance the principles that we believe in and that so many Egyptians have sacrificed for these last several years, no matter what party or faction they belong to.

So America will work with all those in Egypt and around the world who support a future of stability that rests on a foundation of justice and peace and dignity.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at his vacation residence.

The President's Weekly Address
August 17, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past few weeks, I've been visiting with Americans across the country to talk about what we need to do to secure a better bargain for the middle class.

We need to rebuild an economy that rewards hard work and responsibility, an economy built firmly on the cornerstones of middle class life: good jobs, a good education, a home of your own, a secure retirement, and quality, affordable health care that's there when you need it.

Right now we're well on our way to fully implementing the Affordable Care Act. And in the next few months, we'll reach a couple milestones with real meaning for millions of Americans.

If you're one of the 85 percent of Americans who already have insurance, you've already got new benefits and protections under this law that you didn't before: free checkups, mammograms, and contraceptive care; discounted prescription medicine on Medicare; the fact you can stay on your parent's plan until you turn 26; and much, much more. And it's okay if you're not a fan of the Affordable Care Act; you can take advantage of these things anyway.

If you don't have insurance, beginning on October 1, private plans will actually compete for your business. You can comparison shop in an online marketplace, just like you would for cell phone plans or plane tickets. You may be eligible for new tax credits to help you afford the plan that's right for you. And if you're among the up to half of all Americans who've been sick or have a preexisting condition, this law means that beginning January 1, insurance companies have to cover you, and they can't use your medical history to charge you more than anybody else.

You can find out more about the law and how to sign up to buy your own coverage right now at healthcare.gov. Tell your friends and neighbors without insurance about it too. And tell your kids that there's a new, easy way to buy affordable plans specifically tailored to young people.

Many Members of Congress in both parties are working hard to inform their constituents about these benefits, protections, and affordable plans. But there's also a group of Republicans in Congress working hard to confuse people and making empty promises that they'll either shut down the health care law or, if they don't get their way, they'll shut down the Government.

Think about that. They're actually having a debate between hurting Americans who will no longer be denied affordable care just because they've been sick and harming the economy and millions of Americans in the process. And many Republicans are more concerned with how badly this debate will hurt them politically than they are with how badly it'll hurt the country.

A lot of Republicans seem to believe that if they can gum up the works and make this law fail, they'll somehow be sticking it to me. But they'd just be sticking it to you.

Some even say that if you call their office with questions about the law, they'll refuse to help. Call me old fashioned, but that's lousy constituent service. And it's not what you deserve.

Your health insurance isn't something to play politics with. Our economy isn't something to play politics with. This is not a game. It's about the economic security of millions of families.

See, in the States where Governors and legislatures and insurers are working together to implement this law properly—States like California, New York, Colorado, and Maryland—competition and consumer choice are actually making insurance affordable.

So I'm going to keep doing everything in my power to make sure this law works as it's supposed to. Because in the United States of America, health insurance isn't a privilege, it's your right. And we're going to keep it that way.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:35 p.m. on August 9 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on August 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 17.

Remarks Honoring the 1973 Super Bowl Champion Miami Dolphins
August 20, 2013

The President. Come on over, Coach. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Please have a seat. Now, it's mid-August, which means football is in the air. And I love baseball, but SportsCenter is better when you've also got some football on there. [*Laughter*] College football kicks off next week; NFL regular season the week after that. And so today, just to whet everybody's appetite, I am proud to welcome the only undefeated, untied team in NFL history to the White House for the very first time: Give it up for the 1972 Miami Dolphins!

I know this is a little unorthodox four decades after the fact, but these guys never got their White House visit after winning Super Bowl VII. I know some of them are a little harder to recognize these days. [*Laughter*] They don't have the Afros or the mutton chops, the Fu Manchus. [*Laughter*] But I want to recognize and thank, first and foremost, their outstanding coach, Coach Shula—the legendary Hall of Fame Coach Shula. I want to thank the owners, Stephen Ross, and I want to thank Tim Robbie and everyone from the Dolphins organization who helped make this event possible after all this time.

And I know that some people may be asking why we're doing this after all these years. And

my answer is simple: I wanted to be the young guy up here for once. [*Laughter*]

Former quarterback Bob Griese. That's cold. That's cold.

The President. I did have to explain to my staff, who mostly are in their early thirties, what an incredible impact these guys had, including on me, when they were playing. These Dolphins made history back before Super Bowl champs started visiting the White House. The first teams didn't start coming until after 1980. And let's face it, this is also just a fun thing to do. I like doing it as President. [*Laughter*] I even let the Packers come a couple of years ago, which was hard to do. [*Laughter*] So I decided that it was high time to pay tribute to the NFL's only perfect team and to get Butch and Sundance and the No-Name Defense in here too.

In 1972, these guys were a juggernaut. They had a grinding running game that wore opponents down. They became the first team ever with two thousand-yard rushers. They had the league's best offense. They had the league's best defense. They posted three shutouts. They doubled the score of their opponents eight times. And they did most of it after their outstanding Pro Bowl starting quarterback, Bob Griese, broke his leg in week 5. And that brought in backup Earl "Old Bones" Morrall—[*laughter*]—who unfortunately couldn't be here today. As one teammate later said, "Earl couldn't run, and he couldn't throw." But Earl could win, and that's what he and the Dolphins did again and again and again.

Winning the Super Bowl, however, was not a foregone conclusion. The Dolphins had to win in Pittsburgh just to make it there. And once they did, they still were slight underdogs to the Redskins in the big game. Plus, they'd lost in the Super Bowl the year before. People were stupidly, doubting whether Coach Shula was going to win the big one. So the pressure was on leading up to the big game. But the key to their victory, I am told, is that Csonka put an alligator in Coach Shula's shower. [*Laughter*]

So that loosened everybody up. The Dolphins went on to win their first of back-to-back titles. And with every year, this team's accomplishments just look better and better. They're one of only two teams to play in three straight Super Bowls. Seven players have busts in the Hall of Fame. Coach Shula retired with more wins than any coach in NFL history. Each and every time that perfect record has been challenged, team after team has fallen short.

But these Dolphins didn't always get the credit they deserve. Some said that they only had to play 14 regular season games. I've got to come clean here. A couple a years ago, I hosted the '85 Bears out on the South Lawn. They'd also missed their chance to have a White House visit, and that day I called them the greatest team ever. But, I mean, take it with a grain of salt. They're—[*laughter*]—the Bears lost once in their nearly perfect season.

Former Head Coach Don Shula. Who beat them that year?

The President. It happened to be the Dolphins. [*Laughter*]

Former running back Eugene E. "Mercury" Morris. Thank you again. Thank you again.

The President. So I think you made your point. [*Laughter*] Nobody can argue with this record. Nobody can argue with what all of you have gone on to do after you hung up the shoulder pads for the last time. Players from this team have gone on to become a minister, a mayor, a doctor, a State senator, a high school counselor, many successful businessmen. Nick Buoniconti helped found the world's most comprehensive spinal cord research center. Some have dabbled in acting. [*Laughter*] I hear somebody serves up a pretty good T-bone as well. [*Laughter*]

So these are all men of accomplishment and character, and it showed on the field and off the field as well. We want to congratulate all of them, and we want to make sure that they're remembered for not only the history that sports fans will always remember, but also for all the countless contributions that they've made in their community as well.

So thank you, again. Congratulations. It's been a great honor to be here.

All right. There we go.

[*At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey.*]

Former Coach Shula. Thank you, Mr. President. It's great to be here, and we feel honored. It's been 40 years, but what the hell, we still feel honored. [*Laughter*] But when you look at that, the undefeated team, and we all signed it, and we want to present you with this. And even though you were a Bear fan, we understand, you've got to root for somebody, so—[*laughter*]. But everybody's signed this, the undefeated '72 Dolphins, and we—this is something that we hope that you find a good spot for somewhere in your office or where you can look at it and think about the whipping that we put on that '85 Bears team. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. Let's hold it up. Come on, folks. All right, everybody—are we going to strike the podium here? We've got to get a good picture.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lawrence R. "Butch" Csonka, former fullback, James F. "Sundance" Kiick, former running back, Nicholas A. Buoniconti, former linebacker, and Timothy J. Robbie, son of Joe Robbie, former owner, Miami Dolphins.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Mali
August 20, 2013

On behalf of the people of the United States, I congratulate the people of Mali and President-elect Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on a successful election on August 11. Through the interim Government's management of a peaceful, inclusive, and credible electoral process, and with the extraordinary turnout of the Malian people, this election has helped restore Mali's democratic tradition. We encourage the candidates and their supporters to accept the results and to use this election as a foundation for further progress on democracy, national reconciliation, and addressing the security and humanitarian crises in the north. The United States stands with the people and Government of Mali as they work to advance peace and stability in Mali and the region. We look forward to working closely with the new Government to broaden and deepen the ties between our two nations.

Remarks at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, in Buffalo, New York
August 22, 2013

The President. Hello, Buffalo! Hello, Bulls! Well, it is good to be back in Buffalo, good to be back in New York.

I want to begin by making sure we all thank Silvana for the wonderful introduction. Give her a big round of applause. Her mom and dad are here somewhere. Where are they? I know they're pretty proud. There they are right there. Give mom and dad a big round of applause.

A number of other people I want to acknowledge here: first of all, our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who's doing a great job. One of the finest Governors in the country, your Governor, Andrew Cuomo is here. Your outstanding mayor, Brian Higgins, is here. Give him a big round of applause.

Audience members. Congressman!

The President. What?

Audience members. The mayor is Byron Brown!

The President. Byron Brown. That's—I'm sorry, Byron. Let me—what I meant was, your Congressman, Brian Higgins, is here. Your mayor, Byron Brown, is here. This is what happens when you get to be 52 years old. [*Laughter*] When I was 51, everything was smooth. [*Laughter*] But your Congressman and your

mayor are doing outstanding work. We just rode on the bus over from the airport, and they were telling me that Buffalo is on the move. That was the story.

A couple other people I want to acknowledge: SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher is here, doing a great job; University President Satish Tripathi is here; and we've got all the students in the house. Thank all the students for being here. Yes!

Now, today is a check-in day at the dorms. So I want to thank all the students for taking a few minutes from setting up your futons and—[*laughter*]—your minifridges just to come out here. I hear that the last sitting President to speak here was Millard Fillmore. And he was actually chancellor of the university at the same time, which sounds fun, but I've got enough on my plate. [*Laughter*]

So this is our first stop on a 2-day road trip through New York and Pennsylvania. And after this, I head to Syracuse to speak—[*applause*]—yay, Syracuse—to speak with some high schoolers. Tomorrow I'm going to visit SUNY Binghamton and Lackawanna College in Scranton. But I wanted to start here at University of Buffalo.

And I wanted to do it for two—for a couple of reasons. First, I know you're focused on the future. As I said, talking to the mayor, he was describing a new medical school and new opportunities for the high-tech jobs of tomorrow. So there's great work being done at this institution. I also know that everybody here must be fearless, because the football team kicks off against number-two Ohio State next weekend. Good luck, guys. [*Laughter*] It's going to be a great experience. [*Laughter*] It's going to be a great experience. It could be an upset.

And third, and most importantly, I know that the young people here are committed to earning your degree, to helping this university to make sure that every one of you "finishes in four"—[*applause*]—makes sure that you're prepared for whatever comes next. And that's what I want to talk about here today.

Over the last month, I've been visiting towns across the country, talking about—yes, feel free to sit down. Get comfortable. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too. The—[*applause*].

Over the last month, I've been out there talking about what we need to do as a country to make sure that we've got a better bargain for the middle class and everybody who's working hard to get into the middle class: a national strategy to make sure that everybody who works hard has a chance to succeed in this 21st-century economy.

Now, I think all of us here know that for the past 4½ years, we've been fighting back from a brutal recession that cost millions of Americans their jobs and their homes and their savings. But what the recession also did was it showed that for too long, we've seen an erosion of middle class security.

So together, we saved the auto industry. Together, we took on a broken health care system. We invested in new technologies. We started reversing our addiction to foreign oil. We changed a Tax Code that was tilted too far in favor of the wealthy at the expense of working families.

And add it all up, today our businesses have created 7.3 million new jobs over the last 41 months. We now generate more renewable energy than ever before. We sell more goods made in America to the rest of the world than ever. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years. Here in Buffalo, the Governor and the mayor were describing over a billion dollars in investment, riverfront being changed, construction booming—signs of progress.

So thanks to the grit and the resilience of the American people, we've cleared away the rubble from the financial crisis. We've started to lay the foundation for a stronger, more durable economic growth.

But as any middle class family will tell you—as folks here in Buffalo will tell you—we're not where we need to be yet. Because even before the crisis hit—and it sounded like Buffalo knows something about this—we were living through a decade where a few at the top were

doing better and better, most families were working harder and harder just to get by. Manufacturing was leaving, jobs moving overseas, losing our competitive edge. And it's a struggle for a lot of folks.

So reversing this trend should be—must be—Washington's highest priority. It's my highest priority. I've got to say, it's not always Washington's highest priority. Because rather than keeping focus on a growing economy that creates good middle class jobs, we've seen a faction of Republicans in Congress suggest that maybe America shouldn't pay its bills that have already been run up, that we should shut down Government if they can't shut down Obamacare.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That won't grow our economy. That won't create jobs. That won't help our middle class. We can't afford, in Washington, the usual circus of distractions and political posturing. We can't afford that right now.

What we need is to build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America, focus on that: a good job with good wages, a good education, a home of your own, affordable health care, a secure retirement. Bread-and-butter, pocketbook issues that you care about every single day, that you're thinking about every single day. And we've got to create more pathways into the middle class for folks who are willing to work for it. That's what's always made America great. It's not just how many billionaires we produce, but our ability to give everybody who works hard the chance to pursue their own measure of happiness. That's what America is all about.

Now, there aren't many things that are more important to that idea of economic mobility—the idea that you can make it if you try—than a good education. All the students here know that. That's why you're here. That's why your families have made big sacrifices, because we understand that in the face of greater and greater global competition, in a knowledge-based economy, a great education is more important than ever.

A higher education is the single best investment you can make in your future. And I'm proud of all the students who are making that investment. And that's not just me saying it. Look, right now the unemployment rate for Americans with at least a college degree is about one-third lower than the national average. The incomes of folks who have at least a college degree are more than twice those of Americans without a high school diploma. So more than ever before, some form of higher education is the surest path into the middle class.

But what I want to talk about today is what's become a barrier and a burden for too many American families, and that is the soaring cost of higher education.

This is something that everybody knows you need: a college education. On the other hand, college has never been more expensive. Over the past three decades, the average tuition at a public 4-year college has gone up by more than 250 percent—250 percent. Now, a typical family's income has only gone up 16 percent. So think about that: Tuition's gone up 250 percent; income gone up 16 percent. That's a big gap.

Now, it's true that a lot of universities have tried to provide financial aid and work-study programs. And so not every student—in fact, most students are probably not paying the sticker price of tuition. We understand that. But what we also understand is that if it's going up 250 [percent]* and your incomes are only going up 16 [percent],* at some point, families are having to make up some of the difference, or students are having to make up some of the difference, with debt.

And meanwhile, over the past few years, States have been cutting back on their higher education budgets. New York has done better than a lot of States, but the fact is that we've been spending more money on prisons, less money on college. And meanwhile, not enough colleges have been working to figure out: how do we control costs? How do we cut back on costs? So all this sticks it to students, sticks it to

* White House correction.

families, but also, taxpayers end up paying a bigger price.

The average student who borrows for college now graduates owing more than $26,000. Some owe a lot more than that. And I'm heard—I've heard from a lot of these young people who are frustrated that they've done everything they're supposed to do—got good grades in high school, applied to college, did well in school—but now they come out, they've got this crushing debt that's crippling their self—their sense of self-reliance and their dreams. And it becomes hard to start a family and buy a home if you're servicing a thousand dollars' worth of debt every month. It becomes harder to start a business if you are servicing a thousand dollars' worth of debt every month, right?

And meanwhile, parents, you're having to make sacrifices, which means you may be dipping into savings that should be going to your retirement to pay for your son or daughter's—or to help pay for your son or daughter's—education.

So at a time when a higher education has never been more important or more expensive, too many students are facing a choice that they should never have to make: Either they say no to college and pay the price for not getting a degree—and that's a price that lasts a lifetime—or you do what it takes to go to college, but then you run the risk that you won't be able to pay it off because you've got so much debt.

Now, that's a choice we shouldn't accept. And by the way, that's a choice that previous generations didn't have to accept. This is a country that, early on, made a commitment to put a good education within the reach of all who are willing to work for it. And we were ahead of the curve compared to other countries when it came to helping young people go to school.

The folks in Buffalo understand this. And Mayor Brown was talking about the city of Buffalo and the great work that is being done through the program called Say Yes to make sure that no child in Buffalo has to miss out on a college education because they can't pay for it.

But even though there's a great program in this city, a lot of places, that program doesn't exist. But a generation ago, two generations ago, we made a bigger commitment. This is the country that gave my grandfather the chance to go to college on the GI bill after he came back from World War II. This is the country that helped my mother get through school while raising two kids. Michelle and I, we're only where we are today because scholarships and student loans gave us a shot at a great education.

And we know a little bit about trying to pay back student loans too, because we didn't come from a wealthy family. So we each graduated from college and law school with a mountain of debt. And even though we got good jobs, we barely finished paying it off just before I was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Audience member. Wow!

The President. Right? I mean, I was in my forties when we finished paying off our debt. And we should have been saving for Malia and Sasha by that time. But we were still paying off what we had gotten, and we were luckier because most of the debt was from law school. Our undergraduate debt was not as great because tuition had not started shooting up as high.

So bottom line is this: We've got a crisis in terms of college affordability and student debt. And over the past 4 years, what we've tried to do is to take some steps to make college more affordable. So we enacted historic reforms to the student loan system so taxpayer dollars stopped padding the pockets of big banks and instead helped more kids afford college. Right?

Because what was happening was the old system, the student loan programs were going through banks; they didn't have any risk because the Federal Government guaranteed the loans, but they were still taking billions of dollars out of the program. We said, well, let's just give the loans directly to the students and we can put more money to helping students.

Then, we got—we set up a consumer watchdog. And that consumer watchdog is already helping students and families navigate the financial options that are out there to pay for

college without getting ripped off by shady lenders. And we're providing more tools and resources for students and families to try to finance college. And if any of you are still trying to figure out how to finance college, check it out at studentaid.gov—studentaid.gov.

Then we took action to cap loan repayments at 10 percent of monthly income for many borrowers who are trying to responsibly manage their Federal student loan debt. So overall, we've made college more affordable for millions of students and families through tax credits and grants and student loans that go farther than they did before. And then, just a few weeks ago, Democrats and Republicans worked together to keep student loan rates from doubling. And that saves typical—and undergraduates more than $1,500 for this year's loans.

So that's all a good start, but it's not enough. The problem is, is that even if the Federal Government keeps on putting more and more money in the system, if the cost is going up by 250 percent, tax revenues aren't going up 250 percent, and so at some point, the Government will run out of money, which means more and more costs are being loaded on to students and their families.

The system's current trajectory is not sustainable. And what that means is, State legislatures are going to have to step up. They can't just keep cutting support for public colleges and universities. It means—[*applause*]. That's just the truth. Colleges are not going to be able to just keep on increasing tuition year after year, and then passing it on to students and families and taxpayers. Our economy can't afford the trillion dollars in outstanding student loan debt, much of which may not get repaid because students don't have the capacity to pay it. We can't price the middle class and everybody working to get into the middle class out of a college education. We're going to have to do things differently. We can't go about business as usual.

Because if we do, that will put our younger generation, our workers, our country at a competitive disadvantage for years. Higher education is still the best ticket to upward mobility in America, and if we don't do something about keeping it within reach, it will create problems for economic mobility for generations to come. And that's not acceptable.

So whether we're talking about a 2-year program, a 4-year program, a technical certificate, bottom line is, higher education cannot be a luxury. It's an economic imperative. Every American family should be able to afford to get it.

So that's the problem. Now, what are we going to do about it? Today I'm proposing major new reforms that will shake up the current system, create better incentives for colleges to do more with less, and deliver better value for students and their families.

And some of these reforms will require action from Congress, so we're going to have to work on that. [*Laughter*] Some of these changes I can make on my own. We are going to have to—we're going to be partnering with colleges to do more to keep costs down, and we're going to work with States to make higher education a higher priority in their budgets.

And one last thing: We're going to have to ask more of students who are receiving Federal aid as well. And I've got to tell you ahead of time: These reforms won't be popular with everybody, especially those who are making out just fine under the current system. But my main concern is not with those institutions, my main concern is the students those institutions are there to serve, because this country is only going to be as strong as our next generation.

And I've got confidence—[*applause*]—I have confidence that our country's colleges and universities will step up—just like Chancellor Zimpher and the folks at SUNY are trying to step up—and lead the way to do the right thing for students.

So let me be specific. My plan comes down to three main goals. First, we're going to start rating colleges not just by which college is the most selective, not just by which college is the most expensive, not just by which college has the nicest facilities—you can get all of that on the existing rating systems. What we want to do is rate them on who's offering the best value so

students and taxpayers get a bigger bang for their buck.

Number two, we're going to jump-start new competition between colleges, not just on the field or on the court, but in terms of innovation that encourages affordability and encourages student success and doesn't sacrifice educational quality. That's going to be the second component of it.

And the third is, we're going to make sure that if you have to take on debt to earn your college degree, that you have ways to manage and afford it.

So let me just talk about each of these briefly. Our first priority is aimed at providing better value for students, making sure that families and taxpayers are getting what we pay for. Today I'm directing Arne Duncan, our Secretary of Education, to lead an effort to develop a new rating system for America's colleges before the 2015 college year. Right now private rankings like U.S. News and World Report puts out each year their rankings, and it encourages a lot of colleges to focus on ways to—how do we game the numbers? And it actually rewards them, in some cases, for raising costs. I think we should rate colleges based on opportunity: Are they helping students from all kinds of backgrounds succeed? And on outcomes, on their value to students and parents.

So that means metrics like: How much debt does the average student leave with? How easy is it to pay off? How many students graduate on time? How well do those graduates do in the workforce? Because the answers will help parents and students figure out how much value a college truly offers.

There are schools out there who are terrific values. But there are also schools out there that have higher default rates than graduation rates. And taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing students to go to schools where the kids aren't graduating. That doesn't do anybody any good.

And our ratings will also measure how successful colleges are at enrolling and graduating students who are on Pell grants. And it will be my firm principle that our ratings have to be carefully designed to increase—not decrease—the opportunities for higher education for students who face economic or other disadvantages.

So this is going to take a little time, but we think this can empower students and families to make good choices. And it will give any college the chance to show that it's making serious and consistent improvement. So they may not—a college may not be where it needs to be right now on value, but they'll have time to try to get better.

And we want all the stakeholders in higher education—students, parents, businesses, college administrators, professors—to work with Secretary Duncan on this process. And over the next few months, he's going to host a series of public forums around the country to make sure we get these measures right. And then, over the next few years, we're going to work with Congress to use these ratings to change how we allocate Federal aid for colleges.

We are going to deliver on a promise I made last year—[*applause*]. We are going to deliver on a promise we made last year, which is, colleges that keep their tuition down and are providing high-quality education are the ones that are going to see their taxpayer funding go up. It is time to stop subsidizing schools that are not producing good results and reward schools that deliver for American students and our future.

And we're also going to encourage States to follow the same principle. Right now most States fund colleges based on how many students they enroll, not based on how well those students do or even if they graduate. Now, some States are trying a better approach. You got Tennessee, Indiana, Ohio—they're offering more funding to colleges that do a better job of preparing students for graduation and a job. Michigan is rewarding schools that keep tuition increases low. So they're changing the incentive structure. And I'm challenging all States to come up with new and innovative ways to fund their colleges in a way that drives better results.

Now, for the young people here, I just want to say that just as we're expecting more from our schools that get funding from taxpayers, we're going to have to expect more from

students who get subsidies and grants from taxpayers. So we're going to make sure students who receive Federal financial aid complete their courses before receiving grants for the next semester.

We're—we'll make sure to build in flexibility so we're not penalizing disadvantaged students or students who are holding down jobs to pay for school. Things happen. But the bottom line is, we need to make sure that if you're getting financial aid, you're doing your part to make progress towards a degree. And by the way, that's good for you too, because if you take out debt and you don't get that degree, you are not going to be able to pay off that debt, and you'll be in a bind. So—[*applause*].

All right, second goal: We want to encourage more——

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Second thing we want to do is to encourage more colleges to embrace innovative new ways to prepare our students for a 21st-century economy and maintain a high level of quality without breaking the bank.

So let me talk about some alternatives that are already out there. Southern New Hampshire University gives course credit based on how well students master the material, not just on how many hours they spend in the classroom. So the idea would be, if you're learning the material faster, you can finish faster, which means you pay less and you save money. The University of Wisconsin is getting ready to do the same thing.

You've got Central Missouri University—I went there, and they've partnered with local high schools and community colleges so that their students can show up at college and graduate in half the time because they're already starting to get college credits while they're in high school or while they're in a 2-year college, so by the time they get to a 4-year college, they're saving money.

Universities like Carnegie Mellon, Arizona State, they're starting to show that online learning can help students master the same material in less time and often at lower cost. Georgia Tech, which is a national leader in computer science, just announced it will begin offering an online master's degree in computer science at a fraction of the cost of a traditional class, but it's just as rigorous, and it's producing engineers who are just as good.

So a lot of other schools are experimenting with these ideas to keep tuition down. They've got other ways to help students graduate in less time, at less cost, while still maintaining high quality. The point is, it's possible. And it's time for more colleges to step up with even better ways to do it. And we're going to provide additional assistance to States and universities that are coming up with good ideas.

Third thing, even as we work to bring down costs for current and future students, we've got to offer students who already have debt the chance to actually repay it. Nobody wants to take on debt, especially after what we've seen and families have gone through during this financial crisis. But taking on debt in order to earn a college education has always been viewed as something that will pay off over time. We've got to make sure, though, that it's manageable.

As I said before, even with good jobs, it took Michelle and me a long time to pay off our student loans. While we should have been saving for Malia and Sasha's college educations, we were still paying off our own. So we know how important it is to make sure debt is manageable so that it doesn't keep you from taking a job that you really care about or getting married or buying that first home.

There's—there are some folks who have been talking out there recently about whether the Federal student loan program should make or cost the Government money. Here's the bottom line: Government shouldn't see student loans as a way to make money, it should be a way to help students.

So we need to ask ourselves: How much does Federal student loans cost students? How can we help students manage those costs better? Our national mission is not to profit off student loans, our national mission must be to profit off having the best educated workforce in the world. That should be our focus.

So as I mentioned a little bit earlier, 2 years ago, I capped loan repayments at 10 percent of a student's postcollege income. We call it Pay As You Earn. And it, along with some other income-driven repayment plans, have helped more than 2.5 million students so far.

But there are two obstacles that are preventing more students from taking advantage of it. One is that too many current and former students aren't eligible, which means we've got to get Congress to open up the program for more students. And we're going to be pushing them to do that.

The other obstacle is, is that a lot of students don't even know they're eligible for the program. So starting this year, we're going to launch a campaign to help more borrowers learn about their repayment options, and we'll help more student borrowers enroll in Pay As You Earn. So if you went to college, you took out debt, you want to be a teacher, and starting salary for a teacher is, let's say, 35,000, well, only 10 percent of that amount is what your loan repayment is. Now, if you're making more money, you should be paying more back. But that way, everybody has a chance to go to college; everybody has a chance to pursue their dreams. And that program is already in place. We want more students to take advantage of it. We're really going to be advertising it heavily.

Now, if we move forward on these three fronts—increasing value, encouraging innovation, helping people responsibly manage their debt—I guarantee you, we will help more students afford college. We'll help more students graduate from college. We'll help more students get rid of that debt so they can a good start in their careers.

But it's going to take a lot of hard work. Good news is—from what I hear—folks in Buffalo know something about hard work. Folks in America know something about hard work. And we've come a long way together these past 4 years. We're going to keep moving forward on this issue and on every other issue that's going to help make sure that we continue to have the strongest, most thriving middle class in the world. We're going to keep pushing to build a better bargain for everybody in this country who works hard and everybody who's trying to get into that middle class.

And we're going to keep fighting to make sure that this remains a country where, if you work hard and study hard and are responsible, you are rewarded, so that no matter what you look like and where you come from, what your last name is, here in America, you can make it if you try.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in Alumni Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Silvana C. D'Ettorre, student, University at Buffalo, and her parents Rachelle and Alan D'Ettorre; Rep. Brian Higgins; and Mayor Byron W. Brown of Buffalo, NY. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks at Anthony A. Henninger High School in Syracuse, New York
August 22, 2013

The President. Hello, Syracuse! Well, it is good to be in Syracuse!

Can everybody give Emilio a big round of applause for that great introduction? I think Emilio's parents are probably here. Where is Emilio's parents? Wave your hands. There they are, right there. He did pretty good, didn't he? We're very proud of him. We might have to run him for something.

In addition to Emilio, I want to mention a couple other people. You already heard from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who's doing a great job every day. You've got: Mayor Stephanie Miner is here—there she is; Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is here; your Congressman Dan Maffei is here; the superintendent of the Syracuse City School District, Sharon Contreras, is here; your principal, Robert DiFlorio, is here; and most importantly, a bunch of students are here.

My understanding is, there are students from all five Syracuse high schools here. You

got Corcoran in the house; you got Fowler in the house; Nottingham; the Institute of Technology; and our host, Henninger, is here.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Oh, we're all one family.

Now, I especially want to thank the students, because I know that you're still on summer vacation. You've got a few more days. So taking the time to be here when you've still got a little bit—that last little bit of summer break, that's a big deal, and I'm very honored to be here with you.

I am on a road trip—by the way, if people have seats, feel free to take a seat. I'm going to be talking for a while. If you've got no seats, then don't sit down because you will fall down. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

So I'm here on a road trip through New York into Pennsylvania. This morning I was at the University at Buffalo. Tomorrow I'll be at Binghamton University and Lackawanna College in Scranton. But I wanted to come to Syracuse because you're doing something fantastic here with programs like Say Yes, Smart Scholars Early College High School. These are programs that are helping Syracuse kids get ready for college and making sure that they can afford to go.

And this is a community effort. All of you are coming together, and you have declared that no child in the city of Syracuse should miss out on a college education because they can't pay for it. And so we're hoping more cities follow your example because what you're doing is critical not just to Syracuse's future, but to America's future. And that's what I want to talk about briefly here today.

Over the past month, I've been visiting towns across the country, talking about what we need to do to secure a better bargain for the middle class and everybody who's working hard to get into the middle class, to make sure everybody who works hard has a chance to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

And we all understand that for the past 4½ years, we had to fight our way back from a brutal recession, and millions of Americans lost their jobs and their homes and their savings. But what the recession also did was, it showed this emerging gap in terms of the life prospects of a lot of Americans.

What used to be taken for granted, middle class security, has slipped away from too many people. So yes, we saved the auto industry. We took on a broken health care system. We reversed our addiction to foreign oil. We changed our Tax Code that was tilted too far in favor of the wealthy at the expense of working families. And so we've made progress. Our businesses have created 7.3 million new jobs over the last 41 months. We've got more renewable energy than ever. We are importing less oil than in a very long time. We sell more goods made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years.

So there's good news out there. And thanks to the grit and the resilience of the American people, we've been able to clear away the rubble of the financial crisis and start laying the foundation for a better economy. But as any middle class family will tell you, we are not——

[*At this point, two audience members displayed a sign reading "Free Bradley Manning" and shouted slogans.*]

The President. I hear you. I've got you.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, that's fine. Wait, wait, wait. We're okay. We're okay. That's okay. Hold on, hold on a second. Hold on, hold on. Hello, everybody, hello. Hey, hey, hey. Hold on, hold on a minute. Hold on a minute, sir. Hold on. So now—hold on a second.

Can I just say that as hecklers go, that young lady was very polite. [*Laughter*] She was. And she brought up an issue of importance, and that's part of what America is all about. So we don't want to—[*applause*].

But what America is also all about is making sure that middle class families succeed and that people who work hard can get into the middle class. And what I was saying was, is that we're not where we need to be yet. We've still got more work to do. Because even before the

most recent financial crisis, we had gone through a decade where folks at the top were doing better and better; most families were working harder and harder just to get by. And we've seen growing inequality in our society and less upward mobility in our society.

The idea used to be that here in America, anybody could make it. But part of that was because we put these ladders of opportunity for people. And unfortunately, what's happened is it's gotten tougher for a lot of folks. So we've got to reverse these trends. This has to be Washington's highest priority: How do we make sure everybody gets a fair shake? That's got to be our priority.

Unfortunately, you may have noticed that in Washington, rather than focusing on a growing economy and creating good middle class jobs, there's a certain faction of my good friends in the other party who've been talking about not paying the bills that they've already run up, who've been talking about shutting down the Government if they can't take away health care that we're putting in place for millions of Americans.

Those are not ideas that will grow our economy. They're not going to create good jobs. They're not going to strengthen the middle class; they'll weaken the middle class. So we can't afford the usual Washington circus of distractions and political posturing. We don't need that. What we've got to do is to build on the cornerstone of what it means to be middle class in America: a good job, good wages, a good education, a home, affordable health care, a secure retirement. That's what we need to focus on.

And we've got to create as many pathways as possible for people to succeed as long as they're willing to work hard. That's what's always made America great. We don't judge ourselves just by how many billionaires we produce. We've got to focus on our ability to make sure that everybody who works hard has a chance to pursue their own measure of happiness.

And in that project—in that work—there aren't a lot of things that are more important than making sure people get a good education. That is key to upward mobility. That is key to a growing economy. That is key to a strong middle class.

Audience member. We love you, President Obama!

The President. Love you back. [*Laughter*]

Now, everybody here knows that. That's why you're here. That's why a lot of your families are making big sacrifices to send kids to college. You understand that in the face of global competition, a great education is more important than ever. Higher education is the single best investment you can make in your future—single best. And I'm proud of all of the students who are working toward that goal.

And in case any of you are wondering whether it's a good investment, think about these statistics: The unemployment rate for Americans with at least a college degree is about a third lower than the national average; the incomes of people with at least a college degree are more than twice what the incomes are of Americans who don't have a high school diploma. So more than ever before, some form of higher education—2-year, 4-year, technical college—that's the path into the middle class.

But the main reason I'm here is to talk about the fact that we've seen a barrier and a burden to too many American families, and that's the soaring cost of higher education. The fact is, college has never been more necessary, but it's also never been more expensive.

Think about this: Over the past three decades, the average tuition at a 4-year public college has risen by more than 250 percent; the typical family income has gone up 16 percent. So I wasn't a math major, but let's just think about it: college costs, 250 percent; incomes, 16 percent. What that means is, is that more and more, it's getting harder and harder for students to be able to afford that college education. And families are making bigger and bigger sacrifices, including a lot of parents who are putting off their own retirement, their own savings, because they're trying to help their kids afford a college education.

In the meantime, over the past few years, you've got too many States that have been cutting back on their higher education budgets.

Colleges have not been cutting back on their costs. And so what you end up with is taxpayers putting in more money, students and families picking up the tab, but young people are still ending up with more debt.

The average student who borrows for college now graduates owing more than $26,000. And a lot of young people owe a lot more than that. I've heard from a lot of these young people. And they're frustrated because they're saying to themselves, we've done everything our society told us we were supposed to do, but crushing debt is crippling our ability to get started in our lives after we graduate. It's crippling our self-reliance and the dreams that we had.

At a time when higher education has never been more important or more expensive, too many students face a choice they should not have to make: Either they say no to college, or they pay the price of going to college and ending up with debt that they're not sure will pay off. And that's not a choice that we should ask young people to make. That's not a choice we should accept.

If you think about what built this country, this is a country that's always been at the cutting edge of making a good education available to more people. My grandfather, when he came back from World War II, he went—he had the chance to go to college on the GI bill. My mother got through school while raising two kids because she got some help.

Michelle and I—Michelle and I, we didn't come from rich folk. We did not come from privileged backgrounds. So we're only where we are today because scholarships and student loans gave us a shot at a good education. And we know a little bit about paying back student loans because we each graduated from college and law school with a mountain of debt. And even with good jobs, I didn't pay it off—and she didn't pay off her loans—until I was almost a U.S. Senator. I was in my forties.

So, over the past 4 years, what we've done is to try to take some steps to make college more affordable. First thing we did, we enacted historic reforms to the student loan system. What was happening was student loans were going through banks; banks were making billions of dollars. We said, why don't we just give the loans directly to the students? Cut out the banks, then we can help more students.

Then we set up a consumer watchdog that's already helping families and students sort through all the financial options so they really understand them and they're not ripped off by shady lenders. And we're providing more tools and resources for students and families trying to finance college. And by the way, high school seniors, you guys want to start figuring this stuff out. Go to studentaid.gov. That's a website, studentaid.gov. And it will give you a sense of what's available out there.

We took action to cap loan repayments at 10 percent of monthly income for a lot of borrowers who are trying to pay their debt, but do so in a responsible way.

So overall, we've made college more affordable for millions of students and families through tax credits and grants and student loans. And just a few weeks ago, Democrats and Republicans worked together to keep student loan rates from double, and that saves a typical undergraduate more than $1,500 for this year's loans.

So now, that's all a good start, but it's not enough. The system we have right now is unsustainable, because if it keeps on going up 250 percent a year, your incomes are only going up 16 percent—not 250 percent a year; over a decade—but your incomes are only going up 16 percent, it's just at a certain point, it will break the bank. There won't be enough Federal aid to make up for the difference. And families, at a certain point, aren't going to be able to send their kids to school.

And State legislatures, they can't just keep cutting support for public colleges and universities. Colleges can't just keep on raising tuition year after year and pushing these State cutbacks onto students and families. And Federal taxpayers are not going to be able to make up all the difference.

Our economy can't afford the trillion dollars—$1 trillion—in outstanding student loan debt. Because when young people have that much debt, that means they can't buy a home.

It means they can't start the business that maybe they've got a great idea for. And we can't price the middle class and everybody working to get into the middle class out of a college education. It will put our young generation of workers at a competitive disadvantage for years.

So if a higher education is still the best ticket to upward mobility in America, and it is, then we've got to make sure it's within reach. We've got to make sure that we are improving economic mobility, not making it worse. Higher education should not be a luxury. It is a necessity, an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford.

So now—so what are we going to do about it? Today what I've done is propose major new reforms that will shake up the current system. We want to create better incentives for colleges to do more with less and to deliver better value for our students and their families.

And some of these reforms will require action from Congress, which is always difficult. Some of these changes, though, I can make on my own. And we want to work with colleges to keep costs down. States are going to need to make higher education a higher priority in their budgets. And by the way, we're going to ask more from students as well if they're receiving financial aid.

And some of these reforms won't be popular for every—with everybody because some folks are making out just fine under the status quo. But my concern is not to look out just for the institutions; I want to look out for the students who these institutions exist to serve. And I think—I've got confidence that our country's colleges and universities will step up to the plate if they're given the right incentives. They too should want to do the right thing for students.

So let me be specific. Here are three things we're going to do. Number one, I'm directing my administration to come up with a new ratings system for colleges that will score colleges on opportunity, whether they're helping students from all kinds of backgrounds succeed; and on outcomes, whether students are graduating with manageable debt, whether they're actually graduating in the first place, whether they have strong career potential when they graduate. That's the kind of information that will help students and parents figure out how much value a particular college truly offers.

Right now all these ranking systems, they rank you higher if you charge more and you let in fewer students. But you should have a better sense of who's actually graduating students and giving you a good deal.

So down the road, we're going to use these ratings, we hope, by working with Congress to change how we allocate Federal aid for colleges. And we're going to deliver on a promise that I made last year: Colleges that keep their tuition down are the ones that will see their taxpayer funding go up. We've got to stop subsidizing schools that are not getting good results, start rewarding schools that deliver for the students and deliver for America's future. That's our goal.

Our second goal, we want to encourage more colleges to embrace innovation, to try new ways of providing a great education without breaking the bank. A growing number of colleges across the country are testing some new approaches, so they're finding new ways, for example, to use online education to save time and money.

Some are trying what you're doing right here in Syracuse, creating partnerships between high schools and colleges so students can get an early jump on their degree. They can graduate faster; that means they're paying less in tuition. I want to see more schools and States get in the game so more students can get an education that costs less, but still maintains high quality. And we know it can be done. It's just we've got to get everybody doing it, not just a few schools or a few cities around the country. That's the second goal.

Somebody screamed, and I got—I thought somebody fell, but they were just excited. [*Laughter*]

Number three, we're going to make sure that if you've taken on debt to earn your degree that you can manage and afford it. Nobody wants to take on debt, but even if we do a good job controlling tuition costs, some young

people are still going to have to take out some loans. But we think of that as a good investment because it pays off in time, as long as it stays manageable, as long as you can pay it back.

And remember, again, Michelle and I, we went through this. It took us a long time to pay off our student loans, but we could always manage it. It didn't get out of hand. And I don't want debt to keep young people, some of who are here today, from going into professions like teaching, for example, that may not pay as much money, but are of huge value to the country.

And I sure don't want young people not being able to buy a home or get married or start a business because they're so loaded down with debt. So what we've done is we—2 years ago, I capped loan repayments at 10 percent of a student's income after college. We called it Pay As You Earn. And so far, this—along with a few other programs—has helped more than 2.5 million students.

But right now a lot of current and former students aren't eligible, so we want to work with Congress to fix that so that we've got a lot more people who are eligible for this program. And then the problem is a lot of young people don't know this program exists. So we're going to do a better job advertising this program so that you will never have to pay more than 10 percent of your yearly income in servicing your debt.

And if you're involved in public service or non-for-profits, then at some point that debt gets forgiven because you're giving back to society in other ways. So we're going to launch a campaign to help borrowers learn more about their options. We want every student to have the chance to pay back their loans in a way that doesn't stop them from pursuing their dreams.

So if we move forward on these three points—increasing value, making sure that young people and their parents know what they're getting when they go to college; encouraging innovation so that more colleges are giving better value; and then helping people responsibly manage their debt—then we're going to help more students afford college. We're going to help more students graduate from college. We'll help more students get rid of their debt so they can get started on their lives.

And it's going to take some hard work. But the people of Syracuse know something about hard work. The American people know something about hard work.

And we've come a long way together over these past 4 years. I intend to keep us moving forward on this and every other issue. We're going to keep pushing to build a better bargain for the middle class and everybody who's fighting to join the middle class. And we're going to keep fighting to make sure that this country remains a country where hard work and studying and responsibility are rewarded. We're going to make sure that no matter who you are or where you come from or who you love or what your last name is, in the United States, you can make it if you try.

Thank you, Syracuse! God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Emilio Ortiz, senior, Thomas J. Corcoran High School in Syracuse, NY, and his parents Edward and Margarita Ortiz. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting at Binghamton University, State University of New York, in Binghamton, New York

August 23, 2013

The President. Hello, Binghamton! Well, it is good to see all of you. Thank you so much. Now, go ahead and have a seat; I'm going to be here a while. [*Laughter*]

Well, first of all, let me thank the university and your president, Harvey Stenger, for having me here today. Give your president a big round of applause; there he is. A couple other people I want to recognize: Mayor Matt Ryan is here; two wonderful Congressmen, Richard Hanna and Paul Tonko; your former Representative, Maurice Hinchey, is here as well.

So, first of all, thank you, because it's really nice outside, so for you to be willing to come inside, I greatly appreciate. And I'm not going to do a lot of talking at the top because I want to have a conversation with you about a range of issues, but in particular, something that is personal for me.

A lot of you know that I wasn't born into a lot of wealth or fame; there wasn't a long Obama dynasty. And so the only reason I'm here today, the only reason Michelle and I have been able to accomplish what we accomplished is because we got a great education. And I think the essence of the American Dream is that anybody who's willing to work hard is able to get that good education and achieve their dreams.

And central to that is the issue that—you've got a big sign there—we try to message effectively—[*laughter*]—college affordability, making sure that people can afford to go to college.

I'm on a road trip from New York to Pennsylvania. Yesterday I was at the University of Buffalo. I visited students at Syracuse. Later today I'm going to meet Joe Biden in Scranton, his hometown. But I decided to stop here for a couple of reasons. Number one, I've been told that it's very important for me to get a "spiedies" while I'm here. [*Laughter*] So we're going to pick one up and try it on the road. Number two, I'm excited because of the great work that SUNY campuses like Binghamton are doing to keep costs down for hard-working students like so many of you.

Chancellor Zimpher is making sure that hundreds of thousands of SUNY students all across the State are getting a world-class higher education, but without some of the debt and financial burden that is stopping too many young people from going to college. And that's what we want for all of our students and all of our families all across the country.

Over the past month, I've been visiting towns throughout America, and I've talked about how do we secure a better bargain for the middle class and everybody who's trying to work their way into the middle class.

We've fought our way through a very brutal recession, and now we're at a point where we're creating jobs, the economy is growing, budget deficits are falling, health care inflation has been reduced, and yet there are still a lot of working families out there who are having a tough time in this competitive global economy that we live in.

And the fact is even before this last financial crisis, we had increasingly an economy where folks at the top were doing better and better and better, but the average individual or family was seeing their incomes and their wages flatlining. And you start getting a tale of two Americas. And the whole premise of upward mobility in this country, which is central to who we understand ourselves to be, was being diminished for too many people. So, from my perspective, reversing that trend should be Washington's highest priority. It's certainly my highest priority.

Unfortunately, what we've seen in Washington all too often is, instead of focusing on how do we bring good middle class jobs back to America, how do we make sure the economy is growing robustly and that growth is broad based, we've been spending a lot of time arguing about whether we should be paying our bills that we've already accrued. Or the discussion has been about slashing spending on education and basic research and science, all the things that are going to make sure that we remain competitive for the future.

Most recently, there's been threats that we would shut down the Government unless we agree to roll back the health care reform that's about to provide millions of Americans with health care coverage for the first time. And that's not an economic plan. That's not going to grow the economy. That's not going to strengthen the middle class, and it's not going

to create ladders of opportunity into the middle class.

What we need to do is focus on the pocketbook, bread-and-butter issues that affect all of you: making sure we've got good jobs with good wages, a good education, a home of your own, affordable health care, a secure retirement, and a way for people who are currently in poverty to get out of poverty. That's what we should be spending our time thinking about when it comes to domestic policy. That's what's always made America great. And nothing is more important to that process than what we're doing in terms of K-through-12 education and higher education.

Now, here's the challenge: At the time when higher education has never been more important—and when I say higher education, I mean 2-year, 4-year, technical colleges; it doesn't all have to be 4-year, traditional bachelor of arts or sciences—at a time when that's never been more important, college has never been more expensive.

And in fact, what you've seen is, is that over the last three decades, the cost of higher education has gone up 260 percent, at a time when family incomes have gone up about 16 percent. So I'm not a math major—there are probably some here—but if you've got one line going up 260 percent and another line going up 16 percent, you start getting a bigger and bigger gap. And what's happened as a consequence is that either college has become out of reach for too many people or young people are being loaded up with more and more debt.

Now, we've tried to close that gap. When I came into office, we reformed our financial aid system. So the student loan programs were being run through banks, and banks were making billions of dollars on it. And we said, let's just give the money directly to students, cut out the middleman. And we then were able to refunnel billions of dollars to provide more students with more grants and more assistance. We've done our best to keep interest rates on student loans as low as possible.

But even with all the work that we're doing there, the fact is, is the average student is still coming out with $26,000 worth of debt when they graduate. And for a lot of students, it's much more than that. And particularly, for those young people who are choosing careers where—like teaching, where they may not make a lot of money, if they're burdened with tens of thousands of dollars of debt, in some cases, it's impossible for them ever to pay it off, or they have to put off buying a home or starting a business or starting a family. And that has a depressive effect on our economy overall. So it's not just bad for the students, it's also bad for the economy as a whole.

The bottom line is this: We can't price higher education so prohibitively that ordinary families can't afford it. That will ruin our chances to make sure the 21st century is the American century just like the 20th century was.

So what we've done—and I announced this yesterday—is propose three basic reforms to try to shake the system up.

Number one, we want to start rating colleges based on how well they're doing in providing good value and opportunity for students. I mean, right now you've got a bunch of ranking systems—some of them commercial—and when you look at what's being rated, it's typically how selective the schools are, how few students they take in, and how expensive they are and what are their facilities like. And what we want to do is to start looking at factors like how much debt do students leave with, and do they actually graduate, and do they graduate in 4 years as opposed to 6 or 8 or 10, and do they find a job after they graduate. So giving some concrete measures that will allow students and families to gauge, if I go to this school, am I going to get a good deal?

And since taxpayers are often providing those families and students assistance, we want to make sure taxpayers are getting a good deal as well. And that will create an atmosphere in which college presidents and trustees start thinking about affordability and don't just assume that tuition can keep on going up and up and up.

Now, what we're also going to be doing is putting pressure on State legislatures to rebalance, because part of the reason so many State universities have had to increase tuition is be-

cause State legislative priorities have shifted all across the country: more money into prisons, less money into schools. That money—that means that costs are passed on to students in the form of higher tuition. So we've got to do something about that.

And we're also going to ask a little more from students. What we're going to say to students is, you need to actually finish courses before you take out more loans and more grants. And we want to say that to students not to be punitive, but instead, to prevent a situation where students end up taking out a lot of debt, but never actually getting the degree, which puts them in a deeper financial hole than they otherwise would be.

All right, so that's point number one. Second, we want to jump-start competition among colleges and States to think of more innovative ways to reduce costs. And there are schools that are doing some terrific work in reducing costs while maintaining high-quality education. So, for example, there are some schools that are experimenting, where you can get credits based on your competency, as opposed to how much time you're spending in the classroom.

So there's no law that says you have to graduate—that for you to be in school for 4 years rather than 3 or 3½ somehow automatically gives you a better education. And so schools are experimenting with how can we compress the time and thereby reduce the costs. Are there ways that we can use online learning to improve the educational quality and, at the same time, make things a little cheaper for students?

So we're going to work with States, schools, university presidents to see what's working and what's not. And let's spread best practices all across the country.

And then the third thing we want to do is to is to expand and better advertise a program that we put in place and expanded when I came into office, and that is a program that says, for college graduates who do have debt, we're going to cap the monthly payments that you have to make to 10 percent of your income.

And the notion is that that way it's manageable and you're not going to have to make career decisions simply based on how much money can I make to pay off those student loans. If I want to be a teacher, if I want to be a social worker, if I want to go into public service, then I can do that, and I'm still going to be able to act responsibly and pay off my debt. We already have that program in place, but it's not as widely known as it needs to be, and not as many young people are eligible for it as we want them to be. So we're going to work to improve on that front.

Bottom line is, we need to stop taking the same business-as-usual approach when it comes to college education. Not all the reforms that we're proposing are going to be popular. I mean, there are some who are benefiting from the status quo. There will be some resistance. There's going to have to be a broad-based conversation, but part of our goal here is to stir a conversation because the current path that we're on is unsustainable. And it's my basic belief—and I suspect the belief of most people here—higher education shouldn't be a luxury. It's an economic necessity in this knowledge-based economy. And we want to make sure that every family in America can afford it.

So I'm interested if you guys have other ideas—[*applause*]—if you have other ideas about things that we should be looking at, we want to hear them. And that's part of the purpose of this town hall discussion. I'm interested in hearing your stories, getting your questions. And this will be a pretty informal affair—well, as informal as it gets when the President comes—[*laughter*]—and there are a bunch of cameras everywhere.

So with that, I'd just like to start the discussion. And what I'm going to do is I'm just going to call on folks. Just raise your hand. I would ask you to stand up, introduce yourself. There are people with mikes, and they'll bring the mike to you. And I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, to make sure that it's fair. [*Laughter*] All right?

So we'll start with this young lady right here in the striped top.

Nurses and Allied Health Care Workers/Education/Veterans Employment

Q. Thank you. It's an honor to have you here today.

The President. Hold on a second. I think—here we go.

Q. Thank you. It's an honor to have you here today, Mr. President. My name is Nicole Rouhana. I'm from the Decker School of Nursing here, which is an outstanding school of nursing that has excellent outcomes.

My question today is, because advanced practice nurses, primarily nurse practitioners and nurse midwives, have such an outstanding reputation, we have good outcomes. And the Affordable Care Act is ready to be rolled out soon. Nurse practitioners and advanced practice nurses are in an excellent position to really serve vulnerable populations——

The President. Right.

Q. ——and people who don't have care. I'm wondering if there's any provisions within your educational act that would support health care workers and nurse practitioners to create a sustainable workforce that would be able to support caring for people as we roll out the Affordable Care Act.

The President. It is a great question. Now, first of all, let me—without buttering you up—I love nurses. And the—[*laughter*]. Michelle and I have been blessed, we haven't been sick too much, but—knock on wood. But every interaction we've had at the hospital, doctors are wonderful and we appreciate them, but I know when Malia and Sasha were being born, we spent 90 percent of the time with the nurses and 10 percent with the ob-gyn. When my grandmother got sick and was passing away at the end, it was nurses who were caring for her in an incredibly compassionate, but also professional way.

And you're absolutely right that one of the keys to reducing our health care costs overall is recognizing the incredible value of advanced practice nurses and giving them more responsibilities because there's a lot of stuff they can do that—in a way that, frankly, is cheaper than having a doctor do it, but the outcomes are just as good.

The challenge we have is, we still have a nursing shortage in too many parts of the country. My understanding—you probably know this better than I do—part of the problem is, is that too many professors of nursing or instructors in nursing are getting paid less than actual nurses. So what ends up happening is, we don't have enough slots in some of the nursing schools. That may not be true here, but there are parts of the country where that's true.

So we have to upgrade a little bit the schools of nursing and make sure that they're properly resourced so that we have enough instructors. And in fact, as part of the Affordable Care Act, one of the things that we thought about was, how are we going to expand and improve the number of nurses and making sure that they can actually finance their educations. And so there are some special programs for nurses who are committing themselves—as well as doctors who are committing themselves—to serving in underserved communities. And we will be happy to get that information to the school of nursing here.

One other element to this that I think is really interesting: We've been spending a lot of time thinking about making sure that our veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan are getting the opportunities they need. So we instituted something called the post-9/11 GI bill that provides the same kind of support that my grandfather got when he came back from World War II.

And the young people who have served in our Armed Forces are—just do extraordinary work. One of the problems, though, is, is that they don't always get credit for the skills that they already possess when they come home. So one—and we've got a gentleman here who's a veteran—and one great example actually is in the medical profession, when you get Army medics coming back who served in the worst possible circumstances, out in theater, having to make life-or-death decisions. I met a young man up in Minnesota. He had come back, wanted to continue to pursue his career and become a professional nurse, and he was hav-

ing to start from scratch, taking the equivalent of Nursing 101.

And what we're trying to do is to make sure that States and institutions of higher learning recognize some of the skills, because as we bring more and more of our veterans home—we'll be ending the war in Afghanistan by the end of next year—we want to make sure that those folks have the opportunity to succeed here in America. So great question though.

All right. It's a guy's turn. Right here, yes. Hold on, let's get a mike all the way to the back.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Q. Hello, Mr. President. I'm glad for you to come to Binghamton University. I'm the director of Rainbow Pride Union here, and it's the largest LGBT organization on campus. And my main concern is that I know a lot of stories for—of people who are LGBT who come out to their parents, and their parents are supporting them financially for college, and when they come out, their parents cut off that support. I was wondering if maybe, in the future, part of your affordability for college would be able to include LGBT people.

The President. Well, first of all, the programs that we have in place don't discriminate and shouldn't discriminate. And the good news is, I think the phenomenon that you just described is likely to happen less and less and less with each successive year. I mean, think about the incredible changes that have been made just over the last decade. DOMA is gone. "Don't ask, don't tell" is gone. But more importantly, people's hearts and minds have changed. And I think that's reflective of parents as well.

That doesn't mean that there aren't still going to be struggles internally, but I think, more and more, what we recognize is, is that just as we judge people on—should judge people on the basis of their character and not their color or religion or gender, the same is true for their sexual orientation.

So I don't suspect that we'll have special laws pertaining to young people who are cut off from support by their parents because their parents hadn't gotten to the place, I think, they should be when it comes to loving and supporting their kids regardless of who they are, but we are going to make sure that all young people get the support that they need so that if their parents aren't willing to provide them support, and they're functionally independent, that they're able to still go to college and succeed. All right?

Right here, in the Obama T-shirt. [*Laughter*] You know, so if you—here's a general rule in the Presidential town hall: If you want to get called on, wear the President's face on your shirt. [*Laughter*]

Early Childhood Education/Federal Budget

Q. Good afternoon, President Obama. My name is Ivanna Smith. I'm a graduate student in the College of Community and Public Affairs. I study student affairs administration. With that being said, as we're all students, we know how vital it is to have a good foundation in your education. How does your administration plan to address the major budget cuts that are happening with Head Start schools around the U.S.?

The President. Well, this is a great question. And this will be a major topic over the next several months. First of all, I want to expand early childhood education so that it's accessible for every young person in America.

And I talked about this in my State of the Union Address. It is just common sense. We know—study after study has shown—that the biggest bang for the buck that we get when it comes to education is to invest early.

If we get 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds well prepared when they start school, that momentum continues. If they start behind, too often they stay behind. Kids are resilient, and they can make up for some tough stuff early on in life, but it's a lot harder for them than if we get them young.

In fact, studies have shown that there's some very smart programs out there where you identify low-income single moms in the maternity ward, and nurses talk to them immediately not just about the health of their child, but also

parenting, and create a little packet with some books and some toys and talk about engagement and expanding vocabulary. All that can make a difference. And high-quality early childhood education can continue that process so that by the time the kid starts school, they know their colors, they know their letters. They're ready to go.

Now, unfortunately, right now the Federal budget generally has been a political football in Washington. Partly, this came out of the financial crisis. We had a terrible crisis. We had to immediately pump money into the system to prevent a Great Depression. So we cut taxes for middle class families. We initiated programs to rebuild our roads and our bridges. We helped States so that they wouldn't have to lay off as many teachers and firefighters and police officers. And that's part of the reason why we avoided a depression, although we still had a terrible recession.

But the combination of increased spending and less revenue meant that the deficit went up. And by the time the Republicans took over the House in 2011, they had made this a major issue. And a lot—understandably, a lot of families said, well, we're having to tighten our belts; Federal Government should too. Although, part of what you want the Federal Government to do when everybody else is having a hard time is to make sure that you're providing additional support.

As the economy has improved, the deficit has gone down. It's now dropped at the fastest rate in 60 years. I want to repeat that, because a lot of people think that—if you ask the average person what's happening with the deficit, they'd tell you it's going up. The deficit has been cut in half since 2009 and is on a downward trajectory. And it's going down faster—it's gone down faster than any time since World War II.

So we don't have a problem in terms of spending on education. We don't have a problem when it comes to spending on research and development. We do have a long-term problem that has to do with our health care programs, Medicare and Medicaid. The good news is, is that, in part because of the Affordable Care Act—Obamacare—costs have actually gone down—the health care inflation has gone down to the slowest rate that we've seen in a long time.

So we're starting to get health care costs under control. We'll still have to make some modifications when it comes to our long-term entitlement programs so that they're there for young people here when they are ready for retirement.

But we don't have an urgent deficit crisis. The only crisis we have is one that's manufactured in Washington, and it's ideological. And the basic notion is, is that we shouldn't be helping people get health care and we shouldn't be helping kids who can't help themselves and whose parents are underresourced; we shouldn't be helping them get a leg up. And so some of the proposals we've seen now are talking about even deeper cuts in programs like Head Start, even deeper cuts in education support, even deeper cuts in basic science and research.

And that's like eating your corn seed. It's like being penny wise and pound foolish. Because if young people aren't succeeding, if we're not spending on research and maintaining our technological edge, if we're not upgrading our roads and our bridges and our transportation systems and our infrastructure—all things that we can afford to do right now and should be doing right now and would put people to work right now—if we don't do those things, then 20 years from now, 30 years from now, we will have fallen further and further behind.

So when we get back to Washington—when Congress gets back to Washington—this is going to be a major debate. It's the same debate we've been having for the last 2 years. The difference is, now deficits are already coming down. And what we should really be thinking about is, how do we grow an economy so that we're creating a growing, thriving middle class, and we're creating more ladders of opportunity for people who are willing to work hard to get into the middle class?

And my position is going to be that we can have a budget that is sensible, that doesn't

spend on programs that don't work, but does spend wisely on those things that are going to help ordinary people succeed. All right? Good.

Let's see. It is a gentleman's turn. This gentleman right here. He's had his hand up for a while.

Audience member. Yay! [*Laughter*]

Postsecondary Education/Affordability

The President. Well, that's interesting. You have——

Q. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. You have a little cheering section there. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm a faculty member of the computer science department. I'm very excited and encouraged by your plan on the affordability—reform it. My question is related about the quality of future higher education. As you know, many universities are trying their best to do—to provide the best value by doing better with less. But the challenges are real, and they're getting tougher and tougher as the budget cuts are getting tougher and tougher. So my question is, what your administration will do to ensure the best American universities remains to be the best in the world in the 21st century? Thank you.

The President. Well, the—first of all, what's really important is to make sure that we're supporting great teachers. And since you got an applause line, you must be a pretty good one. [*Laughter*] And I don't think that there is a conflict between quality and paying attention to costs as it's affecting students.

Now, I mentioned earlier, one of the big problems that we've seen in public universities is a diminished level of support from States—State legislatures. And part of what we're going to try to do is to provide more incentives to States to boost the support that they're giving to colleges and universities.

Traditionally, when you think of the great State university systems, it was because those States understood, if we invest in our people, we'll have a better trained workforce, which means companies will want to locate here, which creates a virtuous cycle and everybody benefits.

But starting, let's say, 15 years ago, 20 years ago, you saw a trend in which State legislatures who were trying to balance their budgets kept on cutting support to State education. What happened was that—and I don't know whether this is true, Mr. President, for SUNY, but around the country, on average, what you've seen is a drop from about 46 percent of the revenues of a public college coming from States down to about 25 percent. It's almost been cut in half. And essentially, the only way these schools have figured to make it up is to charge higher tuition.

So States have to do their jobs. But what is true also, though, is that universities and faculty need to come up with ways to also cut costs while maintaining quality, because that's what we're having to do throughout our economy. And sometimes, when I talk to college professors—and keep in mind, I taught in a law school for 10 years, so I'm very sympathetic to the spirit of inquiry and the importance of not just looking at X's and O's and numbers when it comes to measuring colleges. But what I also know is, is that there are ways we can save money that would not diminish quality.

This is probably controversial to say, but what the heck; I'm in my second term so I can say it. [*Laughter*] I believe, for example, that law schools would probably be wise to think about being 2 years instead of 3 years, because by the third year—in the first 2 years young people are learning in the classroom—the third year they'd be better off clerking or practicing in a firm even if they weren't getting paid that much. But that step alone would reduce the cost for the student.

Now, the question is, can law students—can law schools maintain quality and keep good professors and sustain themselves without that third year? My suspicion is, is that if they thought creatively about it, they probably could. Now, if that's true at a graduate level, there are probably some things that we could do at the undergraduate level as well.

That's not to suggest that there aren't some real problems. Colleges, for example, they've got health care costs like everybody else. Personnel is one of the most important—it's the

biggest cost you've got. And if health care costs to provide insurance for your employees is going up as fast as it's been going up, that affects folks.

But—so our idea is not to just have some cookie-cutter approach that doesn't take quality into account. The idea is, understanding we've got to maintain high quality, are there ways that we can reorganize schools, use technology, think about what works so that, overall, we're creating a better value for the student?

And one of the best things that we could do for students is to make sure that they graduate in a more timely fashion. And unfortunately, too many young people go to schools where they're not getting the kind of support and advice on the front end that they need, and they drift, and 4 years, 5 years, 6 years into it, they've got a bunch of credits, but it all doesn't result in actual graduation. And then they get discouraged. And that's an area where we know we can be making improvement as well.

Okay? And if you've got any other ideas, let me know. All right?

Okay. Let's get a young person in here. Right there, yes.

Q. Welcome to Binghamton——

The President. Thanks.

Q. ——President Obama.

Postsecondary Education/For-Profit Institutions

Q. I'm Camasin. I'm a doctoral student here as well as a writing instructor at Syracuse University. And I'm interested in the giving of Federal funds to students who are going to for-profit colleges or colleges I might even call predatory. And I'm very conflicted about this issue, and so I'd like to hear your insight. Thank you.

The President. Well, you probably know more about it than I do since you've written about it. But let me describe for the audience what the challenge is.

For-profit institutions in a lot of sectors of our lives obviously is the cornerstone of our economy. And we want to encourage entrepreneurship and new ideas and new approaches and new ways of doing things. So I'm not against for-profit institutions generally. But what you're absolutely right about is, is that there have been some schools that are notorious for getting students in, getting a bunch of grant money, having those students take out a lot of loans, making big profits, but having really low graduation rates. Students aren't getting what they need to be prepared for a particular field. They get out of these for-profit schools loaded down with enormous debt. They can't find a job. They default. The taxpayer ends up holding the bag. Their credit is ruined, and the for-profit institution is making out like a bandit. That's a problem.

I was mentioning veterans earlier. Soldiers and sailors and marines and coastguardsmen, they've been preyed upon very badly by some of these for-profit institutions. And we actually created a special Task Force inside our consumer advocate protection organization that we set up just to look out for members of the Armed Forces who were being manipulated. Because what happened was, these for-profit schools saw this post-9/11 GI bill, that there was a whole bunch of money that the Federal Government was committed to making sure that our veterans got a good education, and they started advertising to these young people, signing them up, getting them to take a bunch of loans, but they weren't delivering a good product.

This goes to, then, the point I made earlier about how we can rate schools. We're going to spend some time over the course of the next year talking to everybody—talking to university professors, talking to faculty members, talking to students, talking to families—but if we can define some basic parameters of what's a good value, then it will allow us more effectively to police schools whether they're for-profit or non-for-profit—because there are some non-for-profit schools, traditional schools that have higher default rates among their graduates than graduation rates—and be able to say to them, look, either you guys step up and improve, or you're not going to benefit from Federal dollars.

Because there are a bunch of schools like this one that are doing a good job, and we don't want money being funneled to schools that ar-

en't doing a good job. We want to encourage students to be smart shoppers, to be good consumers.

So there are probably more problems in the for-profit sector on this than there are in the traditional not-for-profit colleges, universities and technical schools, but it's a problem across the board, and the way to solve it is to make sure that we're—we've got ways to measure what's happening and we can weed out some of the folks that are engaging in bad practices. All right.

Great question.

All right, this corner of the room has been neglected. So gentleman right there, right in the corner there. Yes.

Postsecondary Education/International Students

Q. Thank you for taking the time to visit Binghamton University. I'm—[*inaudible*]—a sophomore student of Binghamton University. I am from Turkey, and I want to ask something about the international students. Most of my friends' families have been facing some hardships to support them financially. For example, when we consider the—two Turkish lira equals one American dollar, this situation is getting more important for us. We think that the most reason of this situation is the high level of payment. What do you think, and do you have any working about this issue? Thank you.

The President. Well, first of all, we're glad you're here, and we hope you're having a wonderful experience. One of the great things about American universities is, they are magnets for talent from around the world. And that has enriched us immeasurably. It enriches us in part because students who come here and study and excel may end up staying here and working and starting businesses, and that's always been part of the American experience, is smart, striving immigrants coming here and succeeding. And that makes everybody better off, which is part of the reason why we've got to get immigration reform done so that if we're taking the time to train a great computer scientist or engineer or entrepreneur, we're not, then, just sending them back to their country. Let's invite them, if they want to stay, to succeed here and start jobs here and create businesses here.

Now, obviously, when it comes to Federal grants, loans, supports, subsidies that we provide, those are for our citizens. And a lot of Americans are having a tough time affording college, as we talked about, so we can't spread it too thin. What we can do, though, is to make sure that if tuition is reasonable for all students who enroll, then it makes it easier for international students to come and study here as well.

So all the things that I talked about before apply to foreign students as well as American students. We need to make sure that college is affordable, that it's a good value. The good news is that there are schools out there that are doing a great job already. And we just need to make sure that we're duplicating some of those best practices across the country.

All right, who's next? Let's see, it's a young lady's turn, isn't it? Okay. Go ahead, right there in the red—or orange.

Civil Rights/Education

Q. My name is Anne Bailey, and I am a faculty member in the history and Africana studies department here. And I teach African American history and African diaspora studies. And tomorrow I'm going to the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. And I'm going, and I'm going with my son, because I'm here, as you said, because of a good education, and that good education came—became possible because of that faith-inspired movement that really reached such an important milestone 50 years ago.

And I'm so grateful for the fact that I had that opportunity and that my son and that these young people will have these opportunities. But I still kind of wonder where we are now in terms of education and civil rights. Have we—where do you think we are? What do we need to do to kind of make sure that it is education for all, including underrepresented groups? That's just my question.

The President. Well, 50 years after the March on Washington and the "I Have a Dream" speech," obviously, we've made enormous strides. I'm a testament to it. You're a

testament to it. The diversity of this room and the students who are here is a testimony to it. And that impulse towards making sure everybody gets a fair shot is one that found expression in the civil rights movement, but then spread to include Latinos and immigrants and gays and lesbians.

And what's wonderful to watch is that the younger generation seems—each generation seems wiser in terms of wanting to treat people fairly and do the right thing and not discriminate. And that's a great victory that we should all be very proud of.

On the other hand, I think what we've also seen is that the legacy of discrimination—slavery, Jim Crow—has meant that some of the institutional barriers for success for a lot of groups still exist. African American poverty in this country is still significantly higher than other groups. Same is true for Latinos. Same is true for Native Americans.

And even if there weren't active discrimination taking place right now—and obviously, we know that some discrimination still exists, although nothing like what existed 50 years ago—but let's assume that we eliminated all discrimination, magically with a wand, and everybody had goodness in their heart. You'd still have a situation in which there are a lot of folks who are poor and whose families have become dysfunctional because of a long legacy of poverty and live in neighborhoods that are run down and schools that are underfunded and don't have a strong property tax base. And it would still be harder for young people born into those communities to succeed than those who were born elsewhere.

So if in fact that's the case—and that is what I believe—then it's in all of our interests to make sure that we are putting in place smart policies to give those communities a lift and to create ladders so that young people in those communities can succeed.

Well, what works? We've already talked about what works. Early childhood education works. We know that can make a difference. It's not going to solve every problem, but it can help level the playing field for kids early in life so that—they're still going to have to work hard. Not everybody is going to succeed, but they'll have a better chance if we put those things in place.

Making college affordable, that makes a difference. Because we know, in part because of the legacy of discrimination, that communities of color have less wealth. If they have less wealth, it means that mom and dad have a more difficult time financing college. Well, we should make sure that every young person, regardless of their color, can access a college education.

I think the biggest challenge we have is not that we don't know what policies work, it's getting our politics right. Because part of what's happened over the last several decades is, because times have been tough, because wages and incomes for everybody have not been going up, everybody is pretty anxious about what's happening in their lives and what might happen for their kids, and so they get worried that, well, if we're helping people in poverty, that must be hurting me somehow, it's taking something away from me.

And part of what I think we have to understand is that America has always been most successful, we've always grown fastest, and everybody's incomes have gone up fastest when our economic growth is broad based, not just when a few people are doing well at the top, but when everybody is doing well.

And so if working people and folks who are struggling—whether they're White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, disabled, LGBT—if working folks join together around common principles and policies that will help lift everybody, then everybody will be better off, including, by the way, the folks at the top. Because when the economy is growing and people have jobs and people are seeing better incomes, they go out, and they shop more. And that means businesses are doing better. And you buy a new iPod, and Apple is happy, and shareholders are pleased, and—[*laughter*].

But unfortunately, we've got politics sometimes that divides instead of bringing people together. And we've seen that over the last couple of years: the tendency to suggest somehow that government is taking something from

you and giving it to somebody else and your problems will be solved if we just ignore them or don't help them. And that, I think, is something that we have to constantly struggle against, whether we're Black or White or whatever color we are.

All right? Thank you.

How much time have we got? I want to make sure that I get a couple more questions in here. Two more. We'll make it three. [*Laughter*] We'll make it three. This gentleman right here in the front. Here, we've got a mike right here.

Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources and Technologies/Energy Efficiency

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Adam Flint. I work currently at Cooperative Extension, but I've been connected to this institution since 1966. And I want to tell you about the Broome Energy Conservation Corps where we are educating, training and also employing Binghamton University graduates and current students to really take the vision that, well, Kennedy and others advanced of service to the problems of the community and to the country.

And at Cooperative Extension, our energy corps students are helping people who could not benefit from energy efficiency, they're helping getting people employed with local home performance contactors. And we could do so much more if it were possible for programs like ours across the country to be able to know that we're going to be here in 2014, which we don't right now.

And so I guess we've been in discussions with Harvey and with many of the people in this room, with Matt Ryan, with many of the senior Binghamton University folks, and we'd really like to see coming out of Washington some good news about funding for the green economy for the future and for our ability to give a future to our children that right now I'm doubtful about.

You have two girls. I've got two girls. And this is the last century of fossil fuels, so we've got to make it happen. With this energy corps, we could move to food corps and on and on and on. I've said enough. I'm afraid it's one of the family business of the professoriate to say too much. And I'm going to shut up and listen to the wisdom that I hope you will bring to my question.

The President. Well, the—as you indicated in your remarks, we are going to have to prepare for a different energy future than the one we have right now.

Now, we're producing traditional energy—fossil fuels—at record levels. And we've actually achieved—or are on the verge of achieving—about as close as you can get to energy independence as America is going to see. I mean, natural gas, oil, all that stuff is going up.

In some cases, what you've seen is that, for example, transitional fuels like natural gas have replaced coal, which temporarily are reducing greenhouse gases. But the bottom line is, those are still finite resources. Climate change is real. The planet is getting warmer. And you've got several billion Chinese, Indians, Africans, and others who also want cars, refrigerators, electricity. And as they go through their development cycle, the planet cannot sustain the same kinds of energy use as we have right now. So we're going to have to make a shift.

That's why when I came into office, we made record investments in green energy. And that's why I think it's critical for us to invest in research and development around clean energy. And that's why it sounds like programs like yours need to take advantage of technologies that already exist.

We're going to have to invent some new technologies to solve all of our energy problems. But we know, for example, the low-hanging fruit of energy efficiency. We know that if we design our schools, homes, hospitals more efficiently, that as a country, we could probably cut our power usage by 20, 25, 30 percent, with existing technologies and without lowering our standard of living.

And by the way, we can put a whole bunch of folks to work doing it right now. We could gather up a whole bunch of young people here in this community, train them for insulation, for energy-efficient construction, and redo a whole bunch of buildings and institutions right

here, and eventually, it would pay for itself. So it's a win-win across the board.

Unfortunately, what we've seen too often in Congress is that the fossil fuel industries tend to be very influential—let's put it that way—on the Energy Committees in Congress. And they tend not to be particularly sympathetic to alternative energy strategies. And in some cases, we've actually been criticized that it's a socialist plot that's restricting your freedom for us to encourage energy-efficient light bulbs, for example. I never understood that. [*Laughter*] But you hear those arguments. I mean, you can go on the web, and people will be decrying how simple stuff that we're doing, like trying to set up regulations to make appliances more energy efficient—which saves consumers money and is good for our environment—is somehow restricting America's liberty and violates the Constitution.

So a lot of our job is to educate the public as to why this can be good for them in a very narrow self-interested way. This is not pie in the sky. This is not tree-hugging, sprout-eating university professors. [*Laughter*] This is a practical, hardheaded, smart, business-savvy approach to how we deal with energy. And we should be investing it and encouraging it and expanding it. And so I budgeted for it. I will fight for it.

But just as I will be advocating and fighting for Head Start or increases in our science and technology funding, the challenge is going to be that my friends in the other party right now in Congress seem less interested in actual governing and taking practical strategies and seem more interested in trying to placate their base or scoring political points. Or they're worried about primaries in the upcoming election.

That can't be how we run a country. That's not responsible leadership. And my hope is, is that we'll see a different attitude when we get back. But we'll only see a different attitude if the public pushes folks in a different direction.

Ultimately, what has an impact on politicians is votes. And that influence is not only—it can't just come from districts that are strongly Democratic. We need voices in Republican districts to say this is a smart thing to do. And we can make—and by the way, businesses can make money doing it, and people can get jobs doing it. And it's just sensible. And it's good, by the way, for our national security because those countries that control the energy source of the future, they're the ones that are going to be in a position to succeed economically.

So all right. I've got time for a couple more. Yes, right here.

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Lauren Villalva. I'm an integrative neuroscience major, and——

The President. That sounds very impressive. [*Laughter*] What was that again?

Q. Integrative neuroscience.

The President. Okay, so tell me about that. What——

Q. It's not——

The President. Explain that to me. It has something to do with the brain and nerves and——

Q. It's a mix between psychology and biology.

The President. Okay.

Q. So it's not as impressive as you think.

The President. No, it's very impressive. [*Laughter*] Come on. Absolutely. Anyway, what's the question?

Postsecondary Education/Affordability

Q. Well, my question today is about financial aid.

The President. Yes.

Q. Currently, financial aid eligibility is based on—or heavily based on a student's parents' income. Now, there are many middle class families that send their students to State schools like Binghamton, who live in high-cost regions such as New York City. Now, do you think it's possible for the financial aid formula to include the living costs of the region that applicants live in?

The President. It's an interesting question, and sounds like it's got some sympathy. What's absolutely true is that what it means to be middle class in New York is going to be different than what it means to be middle class in Wyoming, just in terms of how far your dollar goes. And I think it is a relevant question.

It is a challenging problem because if you start getting into calibrating costs of living just in a State like New York—a big State that has such diversity in terms of cost of living—then it might get so complicated that it would be difficult to administer. But I—why don't I just say this: I think it is a important question, and I'm going to talk to Secretary Arne Duncan about it and find out what kind of research and work we've done on that issue to see if we can potentially make a difference.

Now, one way of handling this would not be at the Federal level, but potentially at the State level. So you could manage something at the State level, where people may have a better sense of the differences in cost of living in a State, and say, we'll make some adjustments for students who are coming from higher cost areas versus lower cost areas. That might be easier to do than to try to administer it at the Federal level from Washington for all 50 States.

But I'll check with the Department of Education. And I'll make sure my team gets your e-mail so that you get a personal answer from the Secretary. All right? Okay.

All right. I've got one last question, and I want to make sure it's a student. Are you a student?

Q. Maybe.

The President. Maybe? No, that doesn't count. If he said maybe—[*laughter*].

Q. I am.

The President. All right. You are?

Okay, this young man right here. [*Laughter*] I just wanted to make sure. He might have been a young-looking professor. [*Laughter*]

Postsecondary Education

Q. Mr. President, I'm Danny. I'm from here—I'm a student here. I'm from the high school to college, which I'm sure that you know. My question is—you spoke about increasing financial aid for college students. However, I feel that with the competitive job market, a bachelor's will not be enough to secure a job. My question is will any of these funds go towards grad school programs? Or will it be strictly limited to undergraduate education?

The President. Well, first of all, a good undergraduate education means you are much more employer—employable and you're much more likely to get a job. Each additional chunk of education that you get—if done well, if you're getting good value—is going to enhance your marketability. And we see that in the statistics. That's not just talk.

The fact is, is that the average American who has more than—a college education or greater is a third less likely to be unemployed than somebody who just graduated from high school. So don't underestimate the power of an undergraduate education. It can make a difference.

Now, what's true is that if you, for example, in computer sciences want to get a master's in computer science or a Ph.D. in computer science, presumably that will make you even more marketable. And we want to make sure that financial aid is also available for graduate students. And the way programs currently exist, that financial aid does exist, although typically you get fewer subsidies and a less favorable interest rate for graduate education.

We're probably not going to be able to completely solve that, and here's the reason why. I got a lot of scholarships and grant money for my undergraduate education, so I didn't have a lot of debt when I got out. I then decided to go to law school. And I went to a very good law school that was very expensive. Most of my debt when I graduated was from law school; I had about $60,000 worth of debt. But the truth was, I was able to—if I wanted to, at least—earn so much money coming out of law school that I really didn't need a subsidy. I could pay it back. It took me a little longer to pay it back than some of my friends because I went into public service and I didn't try to maximize my income. But if I had been a partner at a law firm pulling down half a million dollars a year, there's no reason why I should necessarily have gotten a subsidy for that.

The one area where I think we can make a big difference goes back to the very first question I asked—that was asked of me when it

came to schools of nursing. Across the board in graduate school, what we want to do is to provide incentives for folks who need specialized education, but are willing to give back something to the community, to the country: doctors who are willing to serve in underserved communities; nurses who are willing to serve in underserved communities; lawyers who are willing to work in the State's Attorney's Office or as a public defender. Right?

So the more we can do around programs for graduate studies where we say to you, if you're willing to commit to 5 years working in a place that doesn't have a doctor and you're studying to be a doctor, we're going to forgive you a bunch of those loans. I'd like to see more programs like that. And I've asked the Secretary of Education to see how we can make those more accessible to more students. All right?

Well, listen, everybody, this has been a great conversation. And I—let me just say that you will be hearing more about this debate over the course of the next year. We will be talking to your university president. We'll be talking to the chancellor of the entire system. We'll be talking to faculty. We'll be talking to students. If you have ideas or questions that were not somehow addressed, then we'd like to hear from you. And go to whitehouse.gov. There's a whole section where we can get comments, ideas. And that—I promise you, we actually pay attention when you guys raise questions.

And for those of you who are still sorting out student aid—if you're still in high school, for example, and you're thinking about going to college and you don't know exactly what makes sense for you—we do have a website called studentaid.gov—studentaid.gov—that can be very helpful to you in identifying what you should be thinking about when it comes to financing your college education.

But we're going to do everything we can to make sure that not only are you able to succeed without being loaded up with debt, but hopefully, you're going to be able to afford to send your kids to college as well. All right?

Thank you for your great hospitality. I appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:48 p.m. in the Mandela Room of the University Union.

Remarks at Lackawanna College in Scranton, Pennsylvania
August 23, 2013

The President. Hello, Lackawanna! Hello, Falcons! Well, it is good to be back in Scranton.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

Now, first of all, everybody, take a seat. I want everybody to be comfortable. Here are some reasons I'm happy to be back in Scranton. Reason number one is, the first time I came to Scranton I was invited to a St. Patrick's Day party that the ladies were hosting. And I've got to say, Michelle got a little jealous, because they were—I was getting kisses, and I came home and had all this lipstick on my collar—[*laughter*]—and Michelle said, "What's going on there?" [*Laughter*] I said, "No, I was just campaigning." [*Laughter*]

So that makes me like Scranton. A second reason that I love Scranton is because if it weren't for Scranton, I wouldn't have Joe Biden. And today is a special day for Joe and me because 5 years ago today, on August 23, 2008, I announced in Springfield, Illinois, my home State, that Joe Biden was going to be my running mate. And it was the best decision that I ever made politically, because I love this guy. And he's got heart, and he cares about people, and he's willing to fight for what he believes in, and he's got some Scranton in him.

And there's not a day that goes by that Joe doesn't talk about where he comes from and he doesn't talk about all of you. And he understands why he got into public service, because he carries with him the values that you taught him and the friendships that he made. And so I just want all of you to know that I am lucky to have Joe, not just as a running mate, but more importantly, as a friend. And we love his fami-

ly. And I am so blessed to be here. And thank you, Joe, for saying yes 5 years ago.

Third reason I love Scranton is because there are a lot of Caseys around here. [*Laughter*] Now, Joe already talked about Bob Casey's mom, who is gorgeous and wonderful, and we love her dearly. But I've got to admit, Bob Casey is not bad either. [*Laughter*] He is a great United States Senator, and I'm proud to call him a friend. We love Terese, and we love his family.

Back in 2008, when we were campaigning in Pennsylvania and we were having a tough time and getting bad press, Bob Casey was right there with me on a train. And you can judge your friends not by when you're doing well, but when you're having a tough time, and that's the kind of person Bob Casey is. And so I'm grateful for him.

We've got—Mayor Chris Doherty is here. Give him a big round of applause. The State attorney general, Kathleen Kane is here. The president of Lackawanna, Mark Volk is here.

I want to say thank you to Urica Carver for the wonderful introduction to Joe. Good job, Urica. And finally, I want to thank all the students who are here. I know that—looks like we've got the Falcons football team here. When's your first game?

Audience member. Thirty-first!

The President. The 31st? You guys going to be ready?

Audience members. Yeah!

The President. Okay, I just want to make sure. [*Laughter*]

I know classes don't start again until next week, so I appreciate you being inside when the day is so nice outside, because these last few days of summer vacation I know are precious. But we're here to talk about something important, and that is, are we doing right by, not just this generation, but future generations?

I'm on a road trip. It started at the University of Buffalo. Then, I—[*applause*]—there you go. Then, I went to Syracuse, talked to some high school students there; then Binghamton University for a town hall earlier today. [*Applause*] Have you—all you guys have been following me around everywhere? [*Laughter*]

And we're ending this bus tour here in Scranton. And I wanted to visit Lackawanna College because of the great work that you're doing here: giving people a first-class education that doesn't cost a fortune, with support in place to make sure that students stay on track.

I'm told that many students here are the first in their families to attend college. And I know your families are proud of you, but I'm proud of you, because getting a higher education is one of the best things you can do for yourself and for your country.

But we've got to make sure that we're doing right by you. That's what I want to talk about today. Over the past month, I've been visiting towns like Scranton and talking about what we need to do as a country to secure a better bargain for the middle class and everybody who is fighting to get into the middle class. We've got to have a national strategy that grows the economy in a broad-based way so that everybody who works hard has a chance to succeed. That's our goal. That's what we're fighting for.

Now, for the past 4½ years, we've been fighting back from a brutal recession, cost Americans their jobs and homes and savings, in some cases. And what happened was that recession showed what had been some longer term trends that were eroding middle class security. Folks at the top had been doing very well. But ordinary Americans hadn't seen their wages go up, hadn't seen their salaries go up. It was getting harder to save, harder to save for your kids' college education. Health care was getting harder to obtain. A lot of manufacturing had gone overseas.

And so what Joe and I said was, our focus is not just to fix the problems created by the crisis. We've got to change the fundamentals so that we get back to the day when if you want to work hard, if you are willing to be responsible, you can make it. You can succeed.

So we saved an auto industry. We took on a broken health care system. We invested in new technologies to achieve energy independence. We changed our Tax Code that was tilted too much in favor of folks who were doing very

well at the expense of working families. We started to crack down on some of the practices we had seen in the financial sector that had got us into this mess in the first place.

And because of that work, our businesses today have created 7.3 million new jobs over the last 41 months. We're generating more energy than ever before. We sell more goods made in America to other countries than ever before. Manufacturing is starting to come back and inshore instead of outsource. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years.

So thanks to the grit and resilience and hard work of the American people—and some good policies—we've been able to clear away the rubble of the financial crisis. We're laying the foundation for an economy that works for everybody. But as I'll bet a lot of families in Scranton will tell you, we're not yet where we need to be. We've got a lot of more work to do.

Like I said, even before the crisis hit, we were living through a decade where almost all the productivity gains, all the benefits of technology were accruing at the very top. And the average family had seen their incomes and wages flat or actually go down a little bit. Most families were working harder and harder just to get by. Costs of everything else were going up, but your wages and your incomes weren't going up.

So reversing that trend, returning to the days when: if you are willing to work hard you can succeed, that should be Washington's highest priority. [*Applause*] That should be Washington's highest priority. That's Joe's highest priority. That's Bob Casey's highest priority. That's my highest priority. That's what we should be focused on every single day.

But we do have a problem, which is we've got some of our friends down in Washington who—and it's not all Republicans, but there's a strong faction—[*laughter*]—who instead of focusing on what's helping middle class families succeed, they're spending time arguing about whether or not we should be paying the bills for things we already spent money on. They're threatening now to shut down the Government and have another financial crisis unless, for example, we get rid of the health care reform that we fought to pass and that's going to provide millions of people health care security for the first time.

That won't create jobs. That's not going to help our economy. That doesn't strengthen the middle class. I have not seen a policy coming out of them that would actually help ordinary folks. And we can't afford the usual Washington circus of distractions and political posturing and special interests and phony scandals. We can't afford that. We've got too much work to do.

We've got to build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America: a good job with good wages, a good education, a home of your own, affordable health care, secure retirements even if you're not rich, more ladders of opportunity for everybody who's willing to work for it. That's what we should be fighting for.

And one of the most important things we can do to restore that sense of upward mobility, the ability to achieve the American Dream, the idea that if—you can make it if you try, one of the most important things we can do is make sure every child is getting a good education.

And the students who are studying here, they understand that. That's why they've made sacrifices. That's why their family are making sacrifices. You understand that in the face of global competition—when the Germans and the Chinese and the Indians are all putting more money into education and putting more money into research and—that we can't just stand pat. We can't stand by and do nothing. You understand that a great education is more important than ever.

And you don't have to take my word for it. Look, the data is clear: If you get some kind of higher education—whether it's a 2-year degree, a 4-year degree, a technical college—you're more likely to have a job. You're more likely to see your income goes up—going up. More than ever before, some form of higher education is the surest path into the middle class and the surest path that you stay there.

Now, here's the challenge: The soaring cost of higher education has become an increasing burden and barrier for too many young people. College has never been more necessary, but it's never been more expensive.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. It's true. [*Laughter*]

Over the past—listen to this statistic, because this is important. Over the past three decades, past 30 years, the average tuition at a public 4-year college has risen by more than 250 percent. So it didn't just double, it went up 250 percent. The typical family income has only gone up 16 percent. So you do the math. I'm not a math major, but there are probably some good math people here. If you've got the cost of college going up like this and incomes going up like that, you start getting that bigger and bigger gap, and that means it's harder and harder for young people to afford college.

And meanwhile, States have been cutting back on their higher education budgets. And let's face it, here in Pennsylvania there have been brutal cuts to not just higher education, but education generally. Not enough colleges have been able to cut back on their costs. So what happens if costs are going up, incomes are flat, and the State actually reduces its support for higher education? Well, what you end up with is, students have to pick up the tab, families have to pick up the tab, and taxpayers have to pick up the tab in the form of more and more financial assistance.

And that's what's happened. The average student who borrows for college now graduates owing more than $26,000, but a lot of folks will owe a lot more than that. I get letters from people who have $100,000 worth of debt. I've got—young people who've got $120,000 worth of debt. And they may be working as teachers. They may be doing really important work. They may be working as researchers. But they can't pay off that kind of debt.

So what's ending up happening is students end up facing a choice that they should never have to make: Either they say no to college, which means that they're going to be paying the price the rest of their lifetimes for not getting a degree; or they go to college, but they're taking on so much debt that they're not sure they're ever going to be able to pay it back.

And if you come out with huge debt, what does that mean? It means you can't get a mortgage on a house right away because you're paying off your debt. You may put off starting a family because you're worried about paying off the debt. If you've got a good idea for starting a business, you're maybe going to put that off because you're still servicing your debt. And that's bad for the entire economy. That's bad for everybody.

That's a choice we should not accept. That's not who we are. Keep in mind, this is a country that gave my grandfather, when he came back from World War II, the chance to go to college for free on the GI bill. All right? My mother was able to go to a public university and get the support she needed so she could go to school even though she was raising two kids and had to work part time to do it.

Michelle and I, we're only where we are today because scholarships and student loans gave us a shot at a great education. And by the way, we did have to borrow a lot of money. I didn't pay off all of my student loans until right before I was elected to the U.S. Senate. I was in my forties. I was supposed to be saving for Malia and Sasha; I was still paying off my loans. [*Laughter*] So I know a little bit about this.

The point is, though, in the past, we've done what was required to support the next generation succeeding, because we understood, if they succeed, then we'll all succeed. But we've kind of lost track of that. So when Joe and I came in—with the help of Bob Casey and others—we took some steps to help make student loans more affordable. We changed the system where student loans were going through banks and banks were making billions of dollars; we said, let's just give the loans directly to students, save billions of dollars so we can give more help to more students. [*Applause*] That's what we did.

We set up a consumer watchdog to help students and their families navigate through the financial options, make sure that they don't get taken by shady lenders. And we gave more tools and resources to students and families to

finance college. And by the way, young people, if you're still trying to figure out how to finance it, go to studentaid.gov—studentaid.gov—and it will give you information that you need.

And then we took action to cap loan repayments at 10 percent of monthly incomes for a lot of borrowers who were going into public service so that they could responsibly manage their debt. And overall, these things made college more affordable, more accessible for millions of students and families. Using tax credits and grants and student loans, all this helped. And then, just a few weeks ago, working with Bob Casey and others, we worked to make sure that student loan rates didn't double. And that saves the typical undergraduate more than $1,500 for this year's loans.

So we've made some progress. But it's not enough. The system is on a trajectory that is unsustainable, because if you keep on seeing the cost of college tuition go up and up and up, then no matter how much money we put in for loans or grants or what have you, it's not going to keep up. And it means students are going to be even deeper in debt.

What we have to do is to actually reduce the cost. And that means that State legislatures cannot just keep cutting support for public college and universities. They've got to prioritize the next generation. It means colleges have to work harder to prevent tuition from going up year after year.

Our economy cannot afford the trillion dollars in outstanding student loan debt. We can't price the middle class and everybody working to get into the middle class out of a college education. We're going to have to change how we do business. Higher education is not a luxury, it's an economic necessity. And every American should be able to afford it.

So yesterday I announced some new reforms to shake up the system. Some will require action from Congress. [*Laughter*] That will—that's always challenging. But these are ideas that should have bipartisan support. Of course, so should Obamacare. It's actually a really good idea. It's going to work. Used to be a Republican idea. [*Laughter*] There was a Governor in Massachusetts who set it up. It's working really well. [*Laughter*]

But some of the reforms we're proposing we can make on our own. We're going to work with colleges to keep costs down. We're going to work with States to make higher education a bigger priority in the budget. And by the way, students, we're going to also ask a little more from you too, when it comes to you receiving financial aid, because you're going to have responsibilities as well.

And these reforms won't be popular with all the institutions out there, because some of them are doing okay with the status quo. Even if their students aren't graduating, they're still getting the money. But I'm not concerned with the institutions. I'm concerned with the students. I want the students to get a good deal. The institutions are there to serve the students and educate the young people.

So my plan comes down to three main goals. Number one, I'm directing my administration to come up with a new, more useful rating system for colleges. What we're going to do is not just measure—right now a lot of these rating systems are based on how selective the school is, how expensive the school is, how nice the dorm rooms are. What I want is for us to measure the kind of value they're giving students and their families. And are they providing the opportunity that we should be providing? Are they helping students from all kinds of backgrounds succeed? Are they graduating students at a good rate? Are students graduating with manageable debt? Do they have strong career potential? Are students getting jobs after they graduate from these places? That's what we want to focus on.

So that's information that's useful. That's news you can use. It will help students and parents figure out how much value a college truly offers.

And then, down the road, using these ratings, we're going to work with Congress to change how we allocate Federal aid for college. Because I said this last year, and I meant it: Colleges that keep their tuition down while providing a high-quality education, we want to see their taxpayer support go up. We should not be subsidizing schools that are not getting

good results for the young people who attend them. We've got to do more to reward schools that deliver for students and our future. So that's number one.

Number two, we're going to encourage more colleges to innovate, try new things, do things that can provide a great education without breaking the bank. So, for example, a number of colleges across the country are using online education to save time and money for their students. Or they may be, for example, seeing if you can get credits faster. If you can show competency, if you know your subject matter, you shouldn't—it shouldn't matter how many hours in a classroom you were. Question is, do you know the subject? And if you can accelerate it, you should be able to save money doing it.

Some schools are trying what you're doing here in Scranton, and that's creating partnerships between high school and colleges so students in high school can start accruing some credits. They can get a jump on their degree. That saves them money.

So the bottom line is, I want to see schools and States get in the game: try new things, figure out how to maintain high quality while reducing costs. And we'll provide incentives to States to do that.

And then, the third thing: Even if we control costs, some of you are still going to have debt once you graduate. That's okay. I had debt. Joe had debt. I mean, not all of us are—have parents who, no matter how much they love us and work hard, can afford to pay for all of our college. But the question is, can you manage it and afford it responsibly? People don't want to take out debt, but they're making a good investment. Education is something that will pay off in time, but it's got to be managed. I don't want debt to keep you from getting the job that you want or getting married or buying your first home.

So that's why we already capped repayments at 10 percent of a student income after college for a lot of students. We call it Pay As You Earn. Right? So far it's helping about 2.5 million students. But there are a lot of students, both current and former students, who aren't eligible. So we want to work with Congress to fix that and make more students eligible for it.

And too many students don't know that the program exists. So we're going to launch a campaign to help borrowers learn more about their options. Because we should allow every student the chance to pay back their loans in a way that doesn't stop them from becoming a teacher or becoming a nurse who is working in a needy community. You may have great skills. You may choose a profession that doesn't pay a lot of money. You should be able to do that. And you're giving back to the community; we should help you do it.

So if we do these three things—increase value, encourage innovation, help people manage their debt after graduation—then we'll help more students afford college. We'll help more students graduate from college. We'll help more students keep their debt low and repay it faster. We can do that.

Audience member. You need to protect our future by banning fracking!

The President. Well, there you go. [*Laughter*] The—now, this is going to take a lot of work. But the people of Scranton, I think, know something about hard work. The American people know something about hard work. So just because something is hard doesn't mean that we don't do it. We can get this done. We can get college more affordable. We can have the best trained workforce in the world if we keep on moving forward. And Joe and I are going to keep pushing for a better bargain for the middle class, a better bargain for the next generation. And, Scranton, we're going to need your help to get it done.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:42 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Ellen Casey, mother, and Terese Casey, wife, of Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr.; Urica Carver, graduate, Lackawanna College; and former Governor W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President.

The President's Weekly Address
August 24, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past month, I've been visiting towns across America, talking about what our country needs to do to secure a better bargain for the middle class. This week, I met with high school and college students in New York and Pennsylvania to discuss the surest path to the middle class: some form of higher education.

But at a moment when a higher education has never been more important, it's also never been more expensive. That's why, over the past 4 years, we've helped make college more affordable for millions of students and families with grants and loans that go farther from before.

But students and families and taxpayers cannot just keep subsidizing college costs that keep going up and up, not when the average student now graduates more than $26,000 in debt.

We cannot price the middle class out of a college education. That's why I proposed major new reforms to make college more affordable and make it easier for folks to pay for their education.

First, we're going to start rating colleges based on opportunity—are they helping students from all kinds of backgrounds succeed; and on outcomes—their value to students and parents. In time, we'll use those ratings to make sure that the colleges that keep their tuition down are the ones that will see their taxpayer funding go up.

Second, we're going to jump-start competition between colleges over innovations that help more students graduate in less time at less cost, while maintaining quality. A number of schools are already testing new approaches, like putting more courses online or basing course credit on competence, not just hours spent in the classroom.

And third, we're going to help more students responsibly manage their debt by making more of them eligible for a loan repayment program called Pay As You Earn, which caps your loan payments at 10 percent of what you make. And we'll reach out directly to students to make sure they know that this program exists.

These reforms won't be popular with everybody. But the path we're on now is unsustainable for our students and our economy. Higher education shouldn't be a luxury or a roll of the dice; it's an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on August 21 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on August 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 24.

Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Ty M. Carter
August 26, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. Actually, I should say welcome back. Many of you joined us earlier this year when we presented the Medal of Honor to Clint Romesha for his actions in the very same battle that we remember today.

Clint could not be here. He's engaged in a—this week in a cause that is very close to all of our hearts, and that's ending homelessness among our veterans. But we are honored to welcome back some of the men who fought that day at Combat Outpost Keating, members of Black Knight Troop, and the Gold Star families of those who gave their lives that day.

As these soldiers and families will tell you, they're a family, forged in battle and loss and love. So today is something of a reunion. And

we come together again, with gratitude and pride, to bestow the Medal of Honor on a second member of this family, Staff Sergeant Ty Carter.

As always, we're joined by many distinguished guests, and we welcome you all. Today I want to focus on our most distinguished guests: more than 40 members of Ty's family; your parents Mark, Paula, and stepmom Barbara; your wife Shannon, who you call the CEO of your family. You're a wise man. I've got the same arrangement. [*Laughter*] Your beautiful children: 14-year-old Jayden; 8-year-old Madison in her new dress, and she was telling me about her new room as we walked over here, that—[*laughter*]—and 9-month-old Sehara, for whom we will try to make this brief because we don't know how long the Cheerios will last. [*Laughter*]

Before they came, Ty said he was hoping to take his children around Washington to show them the sights and the history. But, Jayden, Madison, if you want to know what makes our country truly great, if you want to know what a true American hero looks like, then you don't have to look too far. You just have to look at your dad. Because today he's the sight we've come to see. Your dad inspires us, just like all those big monuments and memorials do.

For this is a historic day: the first time in nearly half a century, since the Vietnam war, that we've been able to present the Medal of Honor to two survivors of the same battle. Indeed, when we paid tribute to Clint Romesha earlier this year, we recalled how he and his team provided the cover that allowed three wounded Americans, pinned down in a Humvee, to make their escape. The medal we present today, the soldier that we honor—Ty Carter—is the story of what happened in that Humvee. It's the story of what our troops do for each other.

As some of you may recall, COP Keating was not just one of the most remote outposts in Afghanistan, it was also one of the most vulnerable: on low ground, deep in a valley, surrounded by towering mountains. When soldiers like Ty arrived, they couldn't believe it. They said it was like being in a fishbowl, easy targets for enemies in the hills above. And as dawn broke that October morning, with Ty and most of our troops still in their bunks, their worst fears became a reality.

Fifty-three American soldiers were suddenly surrounded by more than 300 Taliban fighters. The outpost was being slammed from every direction: machine-gun fire, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, sniper fire. It was chaos, the blizzard of bullets and steel into which Ty ran, not once or twice or even a few times, but perhaps 10 times. And in doing so, he displayed the essence of true heroism: "not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost."

Ty jumped out of bed, put on his boots and his helmet and his Kevlar vest, grabbed some ammo, and he ran into bullets coming down like rain, for a hundred meters, to resupply his comrades out in that Humvee. When they needed more, he ran back, blasted the locks off supply rooms and sprinted yet again—dodging explosions, darting between craters—back to the Humvee.

The ferocious fire forced them inside. And so it was that five American soldiers, including Ty and Specialist Stephan Mace, found themselves trapped in that Humvee, the tires flat, RPGs pouring in, peppering them with shrapnel, threatening to break through the armor of their vehicle. And worst of all, Taliban fighters were penetrating the camp. The choice, it seemed, was simple: stay and die or make a run for it.

So once more, Ty stepped out into the barrage and, along with Sergeant Brad Larson, he laid down fire, providing cover for the other three, including Stephan, as they dashed for safety. But in those hellish moments, one man went down and then another. And Stephan disappeared into the dust and smoke.

Back in that Humvee, Ty and Brad held out for hours; rolling down the window, just a crack, taking a shot, over and over; holding the line, preventing that outpost from being completely overrun. Ty would later say, "We weren't going to surrender, we were going to fight" to the last round. And then they saw

him—their buddy, Stephan—on the ground, wounded, about 30 yards away.

When the moment was right, Ty stepped out again and ran to Stephan and, applying a tourniquet to one of his legs, bandaging the other, tending to his wounds, grabbing a tree branch to splint his ankle. And if you are left with just one image from that day, let it be this: Ty Carter bending over, picking up Stephan Mace, cradling him in his arms, and carrying him—through all those bullets—and getting him back to that Humvee.

And then, Ty stepped out again, recovering a radio, finally making contact with the rest of the troop, and they came up with a plan. As Clint Romesha and his team provided cover, these three soldiers made their escape: Ty, Brad carrying Stephan on a stretcher, through the chaos, delivering Stephan to the medics.

And the battle was still not over, so Ty returned to the fight. With much of the outpost on fire, the flames bearing down on the aid station, with so many wounded inside, Ty stepped out, one last time, exposing himself to enemy fire, grabbed a chainsaw, cut down a burning tree, saved the aid station, and helped to rally his troop as they fought yard by yard. They pushed the enemy back. Our soldiers retook their camp.

Now, Ty says, "This award is not mine alone." The battle that day, he will say, was "one team in one fight," and everyone "did what we could do to keep each other alive." Some of these men are with us again. And I have to repeat this because they're among the most highly decorated units of this entire war: 37 Army Commendation Medals, 27 Purple Hearts, 18 Bronze Stars for their valor, 9 Silver Stars for their gallantry.

So, soldiers of COP Keating, please stand.

Today we also remember once more the eight extraordinary soldiers who gave their last full measure of devotion, some of whom spent their final moments trying to rescue Ty and the others in that Humvee. And we stand with their families, who remind us how far the heartbreak ripples: five wives, widows, who honor their husbands; seven boys and girls who honor their dad; at least 17 parents—mothers and fathers, stepmoms, and stepdads—who honor their son; some 18 siblings who honor their brother. Long after this war is over, these families will still need our love and support for all the years to come. [*Applause*]

And I would ask the COP Keating families to stand and be recognized, please.

Finally, as we honor Ty's courage on the battlefield, I want to recognize his courage in the other battle he has fought. Ty has spoken openly—with honesty and extraordinary eloquence—about his struggle with posttraumatic stress: the flashbacks, the nightmares, the anxiety, the heartache that makes it sometimes almost impossible to get through a day. And he's urged us to remember another soldier from COP Keating who suffered too, who eventually lost his own life back home and who we remember today for his service in Afghanistan that day: Private Ed Faulkner, Jr.

At first, like a lot of troops, Ty resisted seeking help. But with the support of the Army, the encouragement of his commanders, and most importantly, the love of Shannon and the kids, Ty got help. The pain of that day—I think Ty understands, and we can only imagine—may never fully go away. But Ty stands before us as a loving husband, a devoted father, an exemplary soldier who even redeployed to Afghanistan.

So now he wants to help other troops in their own recovery. And it is absolutely critical for us to work with brave young men like Ty to put an end to any stigma that keeps more folks from seeking help. So let me say it as clearly as I can to any of our troops or veterans who are watching and struggling: Look at this man. Look at this soldier. Look at this warrior. He's as tough as they come. And if he can find the courage and the strength to not only seek help, but also to speak out about it, to take care of himself and to stay strong, then so can you. So can you.

And as you summon that strength, our Nation needs to keep summoning the commitment and the resources to make sure we're there when you reach out. Because nobody should ever suffer alone. And no one should ever die waiting for the mental health care that

they need. That's unacceptable. And all of us have to do better than we're doing.

As Ty knows, part of the healing is facing the sources of pain. As we prepare for the reading of the citation, I will ask you, Ty, to never forget the difference that you made on that day. Because you helped turn back that attack, soldiers are alive today, like your battle buddy in that Humvee, Brad Larson, who told us, "I owe Ty my life." Because you urged—you had the urge to serve others at whatever cost, so many Army families could welcome home their own sons. And because of you, Stephan's mother Vanessa, who joins us again today, is able to say: "Ty brought Stephan to safety, which, in the end, gave him many more hours on this Earth. Stephan felt at peace." And she added, in the words that speak for all of us, "I'm grateful to Ty more than words can describe." That's something.

God bless you, Ty Carter, and the soldiers of the Black Knight Troop. God bless all our men and women in uniform. God bless the United States of America.

And with that, I would like to have the citation read.

[*At this point, Maj. S. Lee Meyer, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citation. The President then presented the medal, assisted by Maj. Michael P. Wagner, USA, Army Aide to the President.*]

The President. Well, thank you very much, everybody. I hope you all enjoy the reception. I want to not only thank Ty, but once again thank his extraordinary family, thank his unit, and thank all of you for us being able to acknowledge the extraordinary sacrifices that our men and women in uniform make every single day. And Ty is representative of exactly the kind of people and the quality of people who are serving us. We are grateful to them.

God bless you all. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:23 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to S. Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha, USA; Sgt. Bradley D. Larson, USA; Vanessa Adelson, mother of Spc. Stephan L. Mace, USA, who was killed in Afghanistan on October 3, 2009; and Jayden Young, Madison Carter, and Sehara Carter, children of S. Sgt. Carter.

Statement on the Death of Former Representative John J. Gilligan
August 26, 2013

Jack Gilligan lived his life in service to his fellow Americans, especially those in his home State of Ohio and across the United States who were left out or left behind. During World War II, he earned a Silver Star for his bravery at Okinawa. And he never stopped serving his country: as a Congressman, where he helped enact historic legislation from the Voting Rights Act to Medicare and Medicaid; and then as Governor of Ohio.

In addition to his many other accomplishments, Jack was the father of four extraordinary children, including our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius. Kathleen followed in the high tradition of public service that Jack set, and they became the first father-daughter team of Governors in American history. She always made her father proud, and I'm proud to have her on my team each and every day. Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to Kathleen, the entire Gilligan family, and their many friends.

NOTE: The statement referred to Donald D., John P., and Ellen M. Gilligan, children of former Rep. Gilligan.

Remarks at the "Let Freedom Ring" Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

August 28, 2013

To the King family, who have sacrificed and inspired so much; to President Clinton; President Carter; Vice President Biden, Jill; fellow Americans.

Five decades ago today, Americans came to this honored place to lay claim to a promise made at our founding: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

In 1963, almost 200 years after those words were set to paper, a full century after a great war was fought and emancipation proclaimed, that promise—those truths—remained unmet. And so they came by the thousands from every corner of our country, men and women, young and old, Blacks who longed for freedom and Whites who could no longer accept freedom for themselves while witnessing the subjugation of others.

Across the land, congregations sent them off with food and with prayer. In the middle of the night, entire blocks of Harlem came out to wish them well. With the few dollars they scrimped from their labor, some bought tickets and boarded buses, even if they couldn't always sit where they wanted to sit. Those with less money hitchhiked or walked. They were seamstresses and steelworkers, students and teachers, maids and Pullman porters. They shared simple meals and bunked together on floors. And then, on a hot summer day, they assembled here, in our Nation's Capital, under the shadow of the Great Emancipator, to offer testimony of injustice, to petition their Government for redress, and to awaken America's long-slumbering conscience.

We rightly and best remember Dr. King's soaring oratory that day, how he gave mighty voice to the quiet hopes of millions, how he offered a salvation path for oppressed and oppressors alike. His words belong to the ages, possessing a power and prophecy unmatched in our time.

But we would do well to recall that day itself also belonged to those ordinary people whose names never appeared in the history books, never got on TV. Many had gone to segregated schools and sat at segregated lunch counters. They lived in towns where they couldn't vote and cities where their votes didn't matter. They were couples in love who couldn't marry, soldiers who fought for freedom abroad that they found denied to them at home. They had seen loved ones beaten and children firehosed, and they had every reason to lash out in anger or resign themselves to a bitter fate.

And yet they chose a different path. In the face of hatred, they prayed for their tormentors. In the face of violence, they stood up and sat in with the moral force of nonviolence. Willingly, they went to jail to protest unjust laws, their cells swelling with the sound of freedom songs. A lifetime of indignities had taught them that no man can take away the dignity and grace that God grants us. They had learned through hard experience what Frederick Douglass once taught: that freedom is not given, it must be won, through struggle and discipline, persistence and faith.

That was the spirit they brought here that day. That was the spirit young people like John Lewis brought to that day. That was the spirit that they carried with them, like a torch, back to their cities and their neighborhoods. That steady flame of conscience and courage that would sustain them through the campaigns to come: through boycotts and voter registration drives and smaller marches far from the spotlight; through the loss of four little girls in Birmingham and the carnage of the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the agony of Dallas and California and Memphis. Through setbacks and heartbreaks and gnawing doubt, that flame of justice flickered; it never died.

And because they kept marching, America changed. Because they marched, a civil rights law was passed. Because they marched, a voting rights law was signed. Because they

marched, doors of opportunity and education swung open so their daughters and sons could finally imagine a life for themselves beyond washing somebody else's laundry or shining somebody else's shoes. Because they marched, city councils changed, and State legislatures changed, and Congress changed, and yes, eventually, the White House changed.

Because they marched, America became more free and more fair, not just for African Americans, but for women and Latinos, Asians and Native Americans; for Catholics, Jews, and Muslims; for gays; for Americans with disabilities. America changed for you and for me. And the entire world drew strength from that example, whether the young people who watched from the other side of an Iron Curtain and would eventually tear down that wall, or the young people inside South Africa who would eventually end the scourge of apartheid.

Those are the victories they won, with iron wills and hope in their hearts. That is the transformation that they wrought, with each step of their well-worn shoes. That's the debt that I and millions of Americans owe those maids, those laborers, those porters, those secretaries—folks who could have run a company maybe if they had ever had a chance; those White students who put themselves in harm's way, even though they didn't have to; those Japanese Americans who recalled their own internment; those Jewish Americans who had survived the Holocaust; people who could have given up and given in, but kept on keeping on, knowing that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

On the battlefield of justice, men and women without rank or wealth or title or fame would liberate us all in ways that our children now take for granted, as people of all colors and creeds live together, and learn together, and walk together, and fight alongside one another, and love one another, and judge one another by the content of our character in this greatest nation on Earth.

To dismiss the magnitude of this progress—to suggest, as some sometimes do, that little has changed—that dishonors the courage and the sacrifice of those who paid the price to march in those years. Medgar Evers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, Martin Luther King, Jr.—they did not die in vain. Their victory was great.

But we would dishonor those heroes as well to suggest that the work of this Nation is somehow complete. The arc of the moral universe may bend towards justice, but it doesn't bend on its own. To secure the gains that this country has made requires constant vigilance, not complacency. Whether by challenging those who erect new barriers to the vote or ensuring that the scales of justice work equally for all and the criminal justice system is not simply a pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails, it requires vigilance.

And we'll suffer the occasional setback. But we will win these fights. This country has changed too much. People of good will, regardless of party, are too plentiful for those with ill will to change history's currents.

In some ways, though, the securing of civil rights, voting rights, the eradication of legalized discrimination, the very significance of these victories may have obscured a second goal of the march. For the men and women who gathered 50 years ago were not there in search of some abstract ideal. They were there seeking jobs as well as justice; not just the absence of oppression, but the presence of economic opportunity.

For what does it profit a man, Dr. King would ask, to sit at an integrated lunch counter if he can't afford the meal? This idea—that one's liberty is linked to one's livelihood, that the pursuit of happiness requires the dignity of work, the skills to find work, decent pay, some measure of material security—this idea was not new. Lincoln himself understood the Declaration of Independence in such terms, as a promise that in due time, "the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance."

And Dr. King explained that the goals of African Americans were identical to working people of all races: "Decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in

which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community."

What King was describing has been the dream of every American. It's what's lured for centuries new arrivals to our shores. And it's along this second dimension—of economic opportunity, the chance through honest toil to advance one's station in life—where the goals of 50 years ago have fallen most short.

Yes, there have been examples of success within Black America that would have been unimaginable a half century ago. But as has already been noted: Black unemployment has remained almost twice as high as White employment, Latino unemployment close behind. The gap in wealth between races has not lessened, it's grown. And as President Clinton indicated, the position of all working Americans, regardless of color, has eroded, making the dream Dr. King described even more elusive.

For over a decade, working Americans of all races have seen their wages and incomes stagnate, even as corporate profits soar, even as the pay of a fortunate few explodes. Inequality has steadily risen over the decades. Upward mobility has become harder. In too many communities across this country, in cities and suburbs and rural hamlets, the shadow of poverty casts a pall over our youth, their lives a fortress of substandard schools and diminished prospects, inadequate health care and perennial violence.

And so as we mark this anniversary, we must remind ourselves that the measure of progress for those who marched 50 years ago was not merely how many Blacks could join the ranks of millionaires. It was whether this country would admit all people who are willing to work hard, regardless of race, into the ranks of a middle class life.

The test was not and never has been whether the doors of opportunity are cracked a bit wider for a few. It was whether our economic system provides a fair shot for the many: for the Black custodian and the White steelworker, the immigrant dishwasher and the Native American veteran. To win that battle, to answer that call—this remains our great unfinished business.

We shouldn't fool ourselves: The task will not be easy. Since 1963, the economy has changed. The twin forces of technology and global competition have subtracted those jobs that once provided a foothold into the middle class, reduced the bargaining power of American workers. And our politics has suffered. Entrenched interests, those who benefit from an unjust status quo, resisted any government efforts to give working families a fair deal, marshaling an army of lobbyists and opinion makers to argue that minimum wage increases or stronger labor laws or taxes on the wealthy who could afford it just to fund crumbling schools, that all these things violated sound economic principles. We'd be told that growing inequality was a price for a growing economy, a measure of this free market; that greed was good and compassion ineffective; and that those without jobs or health care had only themselves to blame.

And then, there were those elected officials who found it useful to practice the old politics of division, doing their best to convince middle class Americans of a great untruth: that government was somehow itself to blame for their growing economic insecurity; that distant bureaucrats were taking their hard-earned dollars to benefit the welfare cheat or the illegal immigrant.

And then, if we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that during the course of 50 years, there were times when some of us claiming to push for change lost our way. The anguish of assassinations set off self-defeating riots. Legitimate grievances against police brutality tipped into excuse-making for criminal behavior. Racial politics could cut both ways, as the transformative message of unity and brotherhood was drowned out by the language of recrimination. And what had once been a call for equality of opportunity—the chance for all Americans to work hard and get ahead—was too often framed as a mere desire for government support, as if we had no agency in our own liberation, as if poverty was an excuse for not raising your child and the bigotry of others was reason to give up on yourself.

All of that history is how progress stalled. That's how hope was diverted. It's how our country remained divided. But the good news is, just as was true in 1963, we now have a choice. We can continue down our current path, in which the gears of this great democracy grind to a halt and our children accept a life of lower expectations; where politics is a zero-sum game; where a few do very well while struggling families of every race fight over a shrinking economic pie. That's one path. Or we can have the courage to change.

The March on Washington teaches us that we are not trapped by the mistakes of history, that we are masters of our fate. But it also teaches us that the promise of this Nation will only be kept when we work together. We'll have to reignite the embers of empathy and fellow feeling, the coalition of conscience that found expression in this place 50 years ago.

And I believe that spirit is there, that truth force inside each of us. I see it when a White mother recognizes her own daughter in the face of a poor Black child. I see it when the Black youth thinks of his own grandfather in the dignified steps of an elderly White man. It's there when the native born recognizing that striving spirit of the new immigrant, when the interracial couple connects the pain of a gay couple who are discriminated against and understands it as their own.

That's where courage comes from: when we turn not from each other or on each other, but towards one another, and we find that we do not walk alone. That's where courage comes from. And with that courage, we can stand together for good jobs and just wages. With that courage, we can stand together for the right to health care in the richest nation on Earth for every person. With that courage, we can stand together for the right of every child, from the corners of Anacostia to the hills of Appalachia, to get an education that stirs the mind and captures the spirit and prepares them for the world that awaits them. With that courage, we can feed the hungry and house the homeless and transform bleak wastelands of poverty into fields of commerce and promise.

America, I know the road will be long, but I know we can get there. Yes, we will stumble, but I know we'll get back up. That's how a movement happens. That's how history bends. That's how, when somebody is faint of heart, somebody else brings them along and says, come on, we're marching.

There's a reason why so many who marched that day, and in the days to come, were young. For the young are unconstrained by habits of fear, unconstrained by the conventions of what is. They dared to dream differently, to imagine something better. And I am convinced that same imagination, the same hunger of purpose stirs in this generation.

We might not face the same dangers of 1963, but the fierce urgency of now remains. We may never duplicate the swelling crowds and dazzling procession of that day so long ago—no one can match King's brilliance—but the same flame that lit the heart of all who are willing to take a first step for justice, I know that flame remains.

That tireless teacher who gets to class early and stays late and dips into her own pocket to buy supplies because she believes that every child is her charge—she's marching.

That successful businessman who doesn't have to, but pays his workers a fair wage and then offers a shot to a man, maybe an ex-con who is down on his luck—he's marching.

The mother who pours her love into her daughter so that she grows up with the confidence to walk through the same doors as anybody's son—she's marching.

The father who realizes the most important job he'll ever have is raising his boy right, even if he didn't have a father—especially if he didn't have a father at home—he's marching.

The battle-scarred veterans who devote themselves not only to helping their fellow warriors stand again and walk again and run again, but to keep serving their country when they come home—they are marching.

Everyone who realizes what those glorious patriots knew on that day, that change does not come from Washington, but to Washington; that change has always been built on our

willingness, we the people, to take on the mantle of citizenship—you are marching.

And that's the lesson of our past. That's the promise of tomorrow: that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it. That when millions of Americans of every race and every region, every faith and every station, can join together in a spirit of brotherhood, then those mountains will be made low and those rough places will be made plain and those crooked places, they straighten out towards grace, and we will vindicate the faith of those who sacrificed so much and live up to the true meaning of our creed, as one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. at the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the Appointment of Donald E. Booth as United States Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan
August 28, 2013

Today I am pleased to announce the appointment of Ambassador Donald Booth as the new U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. Ambassador Booth is one of America's most experienced diplomats, with broad experience helping promote peace and prevent conflict across Africa, including most recently as our Ambassador to Ethiopia. With his considerable diplomatic talents, deep knowledge of the continent, and unwavering determination, I am confident that Ambassador Booth will advance U.S. interests in pursuing a durable and lasting peace between and within Sudan and South Sudan.

As my envoy, Ambassador Booth will spearhead U.S. efforts to press the parties to implement last year's September 27 agreements and resolve their outstanding issues, including with respect to borders, the final status of Abyei, and ensuring the uninterrupted flow of oil. He will also lead our efforts to bring the conflicts in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan, and Darfur to a peaceful end and to promote inclusive governance and full respect for human rights in both states.

Much work remains, but we know that when the governments of Sudan and South Sudan show political courage and put the interests of their people first, peace and progress are possible.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, President Dalia Grybauskaite of Lithuania, and President Andris Berzins of Latvia and an Exchange With Reporters
August 30, 2013

President Obama. Well, obviously, I'm very grateful to have my fellow Presidents here, as well as the Vice President. Before I begin, I want to say a few words about the situation in Syria.

As you've seen, today we've released our unclassified assessment, detailing with high confidence that the Syrian regime carried out a chemical weapons attack that killed well over 1,000 people, including hundreds of children. This follows the horrific images that shocked us all.

This kind of attack is a challenge to the world. We cannot accept a world where women and children and innocent civilians are gassed on a terrible scale. This kind of attack threatens our national security interests by violating well-established international norms against the use of chemical weapons, by further threatening friends and allies of ours in the region, like Isra-

el and Turkey and Jordan. And it increases the risk that chemical weapons will be used in the future and fall into the hands of terrorists who might use them against us.

So I have said before—and I meant what I said—that the world has an obligation to make sure that we maintain the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Now, I have not made a final decision about various actions that might be taken to help enforce that norm. But as I've already said, I have had my military and our team look at a wide range of options. We have consulted with allies. We've consulted with Congress. We've been in conversations with all the interested parties.

And in no event are we considering any kind of military action that would involve boots on the ground, that would involve a long-term campaign. But we are looking at the possibility of a limited, narrow act that would help make sure that not only Syria, but others around the world, understand that the international community cares about maintaining this chemical weapons ban and norm.

So again, I repeat, we're not considering any open-ended commitment. We're not considering any boots-on-the-ground approach. What we will do is consider options that meet the narrow concern around chemical weapons, understanding that there's not going to be a solely military solution to the underlying conflict and tragedy that's taking place in Syria. And I will continue to consult closely with Congress.

In addition to the release of the unclassified document, we are providing a classified briefing to congressional staffs today, and we'll offer that same classified briefing to Members of Congress as well as our international partners. And I will continue to provide updates to the American people as we get more information.

With that, I want to welcome Presidents Ilves, President Grybauskaite, and President Berzins to the White House. These countries that they represent all share very deep ties to the United States, both as allies and because of the extraordinary people-to-people relations that we have with these countries.

I want to thank all the Presidents who are here and their nations for all that they do to promote democracy not only in their own countries, but around the world. The Baltics are among our most reliable allies in NATO, and our commitment to their security is rock solid. Our soldiers sacrifice together in Afghanistan, and the Baltic ports continue to help support our troops as we transition the NATO mission.

Today we're going to spend some time talking about shared commitments to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, which will add jobs in the Baltics and the United States. We're working on development assistance projects, including building institutions and strengthening civil society in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We will obviously have discussions about our NATO relationship and the security concerns that we share together.

So again, I've had occasions to meet with all three Presidents on a—in a wide variety of settings and wide variety of summits. They have been outstanding friends to the United States of America. We are very proud of them. And I want to thank each of them for their leadership. We know how far Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have come in just the past two decades, and I know that we'll accomplish even more in the decades to come.

So with that, I want to give each of these leaders a chance to say a few words. We're going to start with President Ilves.

President Ilves. Thank you. I'd actually like to begin by thanking President Obama for inviting us here, and we are quite grateful to the United States and to you personally for your leadership, commitment, and support.

The main issue on our agenda today is global and regional security, and the question, of course, on everyone's mind is the situation in Syria. For Estonia, the use of chemical weapons is deplorable. The attack demands a response. Those responsible must be held accountable. Violations cannot be overlooked.

When it comes to our security, we appreciate the commitment that the United States has shown to our region and Europe as a whole, and we attach great importance to continued U.S. engagement in European security.

The transatlantic security link is unique and enduring, as are the common values that underpin it. As a NATO ally, Estonia takes its responsibility to our common defense seriously. We are currently and will maintain committed to NATO's mission in Afghanistan. We spend 2 percent of our GDP on defense.

We also believe in maintaining a strong transatlantic link in other areas, such as trade, cyber and energy security. I look forward to exchanging views on all of these issues, as I also look forward to discussing what we can do together internationally to promote our common values: democracy, human rights, rule of law.

We already cooperate in countries that lie to the east and the south of us: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, Tunisia as well, just to name a few. I am sure that this global cooperation aimed at helping countries transition from authoritarian to democratic rule will be expanded in the future.

Recently, we've heard a lot of talk about pivots. Today, we are on the verge of a new rebalancing of the U.S. focus, this time to the Nordic-Baltic region. Our region is one of the most secure, stable, and prosperous in Europe. We are proud to be part of it. We are proud of the partnership we have with the United States here, and—just as we are proud of our alliance and our enduring—the enduring friendship of the American people.

President Obama. Madam President.

President Grybauskaite. So adding in line, I would like to emphasize that to go with the military security in the region, we are talking about economic security in the region. And here, especially on energy security, United States plays very serious role.

We opened in our region already, in Vilnius, the NATO Center of Excellence for Energy Security and, bilaterally with United States, the Center for Nuclear Security. And this is important because we are on the borders of NATO with some other not-so-secured regions, and why this involvement of the United States is so important for all of our region.

And of course, as a country which presides today the European Union's Council, we are engaged very much in starting negotiations on free trade agreement between the United States and European Union. And I'm very happy that we got one meeting, and now we waiting in October for second one. And I think that it is a generational challenge and opportunity for all of us—for United States and Europe—to have—move fast these kinds of relations and to have very efficient and resultative outcome. And I hope that we will be able to do it fast.

So together with the military new challenges, we're trying to battle new economic challenges together with the cyber challenges, which our region all the time receives and receives. And I want to say that every day, every day practically, we see this aggressiveness and new forms of challenges our region is facing, so why? I just can also confirm that Baltic and Nordic cooperation is a new phenomena—I would say unique phenomena—in Europe, which is very much reliable, and you can count on us as being—we are a strategic partners for United States.

President Obama. Mr. President.

[*At this point, President Berzins spoke briefly in Latvian, and no translation was provided. He then spoke in English as follows.*]

President Berzins. This week is important for American people: 50th anniversary of March in Washington. As I say, for us, this is 15 years—15 years over—when Baltic-American Charter was signed. This is right moment to review and to move forward.

For us, we are really thankful to you during your Presidential time, which have already permanent Baltic, their policing mission—regularly U.S.-led military exercises in Baltics strengthen Nordic—the distribution network to Afghanistan. British-American Freedom Fund, which helps let Baltic students to study in American universities.

Of course, we see future together, at the same time being very active in Europe—we will become members of euro zone the 1st of January. We are actually working—thank you for supporting—to become members of OECD. And of course, our focus is to look for new possibilities in Europe and using our past experience. We are focusing to Central Asian

countries and also to Eastern Partnership countries. And this is particularly important in relations to Afghanistan and to develop this country, already peaceful manner.

Latvia has past crisis, but in the same time, we are have to do much, much more. And having this really good NATO support and such partners as U.S., we can move forward quietly. And it's clear that today meeting is a recent demonstration of the stable, long-term interest of the United States in Baltics and Europe: proud, free, and at peace.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

U.S. Response to the Situation in Syria

Q. Mr. President, is your decision on Syria imminent? And why did you feel like it's appropriate to move forward without formal authorization from either the United Nations or Congress, particularly given that the British Parliament had an opportunity to vote?

President Obama. We are still in the planning processes. And obviously, consultations with Congress as well as the international community are very important. And my preference obviously would have been that the international community already acted forcefully. But what we have seen, so far at least, is a incapacity at this point for the Security Council to move forward in the face of a clear violation of international norms.

And I recognize that all of us—here in the United States, in Great Britain, and many parts of the world—there is a certain weariness given Afghanistan; there's a certain suspicion of any military action post-Iraq. And I very much appreciate that. On the other hand, it's important for us to recognize that when over a thousand people are killed, including hundreds of innocent children, through the use of a weapon that 98 or 99 percent of humanity says should not be used even in war, and there is no action, then we're sending a signal that that international norm doesn't mean much. And that is a danger to our national security.

And obviously, if and when we make a decision to respond, there are a whole host of considerations that I have to take into account too, in terms of how effective it is. And given the kinds of options that we're looking at, that would be very limited and would not involve a long-term commitment or a major operation.

We are confident that we can provide Congress all the information and get all the input that they need, and we're very mindful of that. And we can have serious conversations with our allies and our friends around the world about this. But ultimately, we don't want the world to be paralyzed.

And frankly, part of the challenge that we end up with here is that a lot of people think something should be done, but nobody wants to do it. And that's not an unusual situation. And that's part of what allows, over time, the erosion of these kinds of international prohibitions, unless somebody says: No, when the world says we're not going to use chemical weapons, we mean it.

And it would be tempting to leave it to others to do it. And I've already—I think I've shown consistently and said consistently my strong preference for multilateral action whenever possible. But it is not in the national security interests of the United States to ignore clear violations of these kinds of international norms.

And the reason is because there are a whole host of international norms out there that are very important to us. We have currently rules in place dealing with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have international norms that have been violated by certain countries, and the United Nations has put sanctions in place. But if there's a sense that over time nobody is willing to actually enforce them, then people won't take them seriously.

So I'm very clear that the world generally is war weary. Certainly, the United States has gone through over a decade of war. The American people, understandably, want us to be focused on the business of rebuilding our economy here and putting people back to work. And I assure you, nobody ends up being more war weary than me.

Q. Mr. President.

President Obama. But what I also believe is that part of our obligation as a leader in the world

is making sure that when you have a regime that is willing to use weapons that are prohibited by international norms on their own people, including children, that they are held to account.

Thank you, everyone.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Joint Statement by President Obama, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, President Andris Berzins of Latvia, and President Dalia Grybauskaite of Lithuania

August 30, 2013

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relations by jointly expanding trade ties in pursuit of economic prosperity, enhancing strategic cooperation to address global security challenges, and advancing democracy and human rights around the world. As NATO allies, bound by our shared transatlantic values and holding a common vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace, we resolve to continue and expand our cooperation in the Baltic region and beyond to build a more prosperous, secure, and inclusive future.

The Baltic states have each undergone significant transformations since the restoration of independence just over two decades ago. Fulfilling the promise of the 1998 Baltic Charter, they have become valued members of NATO and the European Union. In joining the ranks of the world's most developed economies in organizations such as OECD and the Eurozone, and assuming the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, their positive influence on global security and economic issues continues to grow.

As we prepare for the opportunities and challenges that will arise in the coming years, we recognize that cooperation—with and among the Baltic states, with other regional partners such as the Nordics, and in transatlantic and international forums—will be crucial to our success. To this end, we have a shared interest in further developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all states in the region. We are stronger and our reach is greater when we work collaboratively and combine efforts in pursuit of our common goals.

We recognize and reaffirm our commitment to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T–TIP) negotiations as a generational opportunity to expand the strong cultural and economic ties between Europe and the United States. T–TIP will not only establish a high-standard, comprehensive agreement that will strengthen the global trading system, but it will also promote competitiveness and growth, adding to the millions of jobs—including Baltic and American jobs—that are already supported by trade and investment across the Atlantic.

As a reliable and diverse supply of energy is a crucial element of economic prosperity, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening energy security in the Baltic region. We recognize the importance of implementing the EU's Third Energy Directive and developing the projects included in the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan, in order to diversify sources of energy, develop transparency in energy markets, and provide the basis for sustained economic growth in the entire region. The United States strongly supports the Baltic states in their efforts to develop domestic energy resources and clean energy solutions—including energy efficiency—in pursuit of our shared goals of strengthening energy security, addressing climate change, and promoting nuclear safety and security.

Recognizing the benefits and risks of our increasing dependence on information technology and cyberspace, we will strengthen our engagement on cyber issues regionally and globally. We will seek to advance the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure in the region through public/private cooperation. We will continue to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of cyber-

crimes. We will strive to advance our shared vision of internet freedom by engaging with other countries, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. Our efforts support a common goal: an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet that protects privacy and civil liberties, enables the free flow of information and ideas, and promotes the innovation essential to modern economies.

The security of the United States and Europe is indivisible. As established in the Baltic Charter, and as NATO allies, the United States has a profound and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Baltic states make significant contributions to NATO missions in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and we are committed to maintaining and expanding Alliance capabilities—for collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management—within Europe and beyond. Recognizing the value of practical cooperation, we will work together to find efficiencies and make the most of limited resources. We will coordinate within NATO to identify and develop high-priority capabilities and training and exercise opportunities, while also pursuing regional joint procurement and other security projects where mutually beneficial.

As NATO transitions to a post-2014 noncombat mission in Afghanistan, it will be crucial to maintain the Alliance's ability to provide for collective defense and contribute to global security. Though economic times are challenging, we must all ensure that we sustain adequate levels of defense investment to maintain a capable, deployable, and interoperable force. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to achieve or maintain defense spending at 2 percent of GDP.

In the last two decades, the Baltic states have undertaken impressive democratic transitions, and they now demonstrate leadership in promoting democracy and human rights and strengthening civil society in the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership, as well as through development assistance to other nations undergoing transition. We will seek opportunities to expand upon these efforts—together, and also with like-minded countries in the region—so the Baltic states can share their successful transition experiences with emerging democracies around the world.

Reflecting our close ties and shared values, we reaffirm our commitment to continue to promote the rule of law as a foundation for a community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all societies to safeguard and respect the universal rights, civil liberties, and human dignity of all individuals within their territories.

The Baltic states remain grateful to the United States and the American people for their non-recognition policy during the Cold War. Our warm relations are anchored by close interpersonal ties and the rich contributions that the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian diasporas have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on an Alternate Pay Plan for Members of the Uniformed Services

August 30, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for monthly basic pay increases for members of the uniformed services for 2014.

I am strongly committed to supporting our uniformed service members, who have made such great contributions to our Nation over the past decade of war. As our country continues to recover from serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare, however, we must maintain efforts to keep our Nation on a sustainable fiscal course. This effort requires tough choices, especially in light of

budget constraints faced by Federal agencies.

Accordingly, I have determined it is appropriate to exercise my authority under section 1009(e) of title 37, United States Code, to set the 2014 monthly basic pay increase at 1.0 percent. This decision is consistent with my fiscal year 2014 Budget and will not materially affect the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain well-qualified members for the uniformed services.

The adjustments described above shall take effect on the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2014.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on an Alternate Pay Plan for Civilian Federal Employees
August 30, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems for 2014.

Civilian Federal employees have already made significant sacrifices as a result of a three-year pay freeze. As our country continues to recover from serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare, however, we must maintain efforts to keep our Nation on a sustainable fiscal course.

Accordingly, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority under 5 U.S.C. 5303(b) and 5304a to set alternative 2014 across-the-board and locality pay adjustments. Specifically, I have determined that for 2014, across-the-board pay increases will be 1.0 percent, and the current locality pay percentages shown in Schedule 9 of Executive Order 13641 of April 5, 2013, will remain at their 2013 levels. This decision will not materially affect the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain a well-qualified Federal workforce.

The adjustments described above shall take effect on the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2014.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address
August 31, 2013

Hi, everybody. This Labor Day weekend, as we gather with family and friends, we'll also come together as a nation to honor some of our own: the working men and women of America who, across the generations, built this country up and helped make us who we are today.

On Monday, we'll celebrate that proud history. We'll pay tribute to the values working Americans embody: hard work, responsibility, sacrifice, looking out for one another. And we also need to recommit ourselves to their cause; to securing for them a better bargain so that everyone who works hard in America has a chance to get ahead.

You see, over the past 4½ years, we've fought our way back from the worst recession of our lifetimes. And thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, we've begun to lay a

foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. But as any working family will tell you, we're not yet where we need to be.

For over a decade, working Americans have seen their wages and incomes stagnate, even as corporate profits soar and the pay of a fortunate few explodes. For even longer than that, inequality has steadily risen; the journey of upward mobility has become harder. And in too many communities across this country, the shadow of poverty continues to cast a pall over our fellow citizens.

Reversing that trend needs to be Washington's highest priority. And it sure is mine. That's why, over the past month, I've traveled all across America, laying out my ideas for how we can build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class: a good job that pays a good wage; a good education; a home of your own; health care when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; and more chances for folks to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work for it.

The truth is, it's not going to be easy to reverse the forces that have conspired for decades against working Americans. But if we take a few bold steps, and if Washington is able to come together with common purpose and common resolve, we'll get there. Our economy will keep getting stronger, and more Americans will be able to join the ranks of the middle class.

So this Labor Day, while you're out there grilling in the backyard or taking the final trip for the summer, I hope you'll also take a moment to reflect on the many contributions of our working men and women. For generations, it was the great American middle class that made our economy the envy of the world. And as long as I'm President, I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that happens again.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:05 p.m. on August 30 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast on August 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 31.

Remarks on the Situation in Syria
August 31, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Ten days ago, the world watched in horror as men, women and children were massacred in Syria in the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century. Yesterday the United States presented a powerful case that the Syrian Government was responsible for this attack on its own people.

Our intelligence shows the Asad regime and its forces preparing to use chemical weapons, launching rockets in the highly populated suburbs of Damascus, and acknowledging that a chemical weapons attack took place. And all of this corroborates what the world can plainly see: hospitals overflowing with victims, terrible images of the dead. All told, well over 1,000 people were murdered. Several hundred of them were children: young girls and boys gassed to death by their own Government.

Now, this attack is an assault on human dignity. It also presents a serious danger to our national security. It risks making a mockery of the global prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. It endangers our friends and our partners along Syria's borders, including Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq. It could lead to escalating use of chemical weapons or their proliferation to terrorist groups who would do our people harm. In a world with many dangers, this menace must be confronted.

Now, after careful deliberation, I have decided that the United States should take military action against Syrian regime targets. This would not be an open-ended intervention. We would not put boots on the ground. Instead, our action would be designed to be limited in duration and scope. But I'm confident we can hold the Asad regime accountable for their use

of chemical weapons, deter this kind of behavior, and degrade their capacity to carry it out.

Our military has positioned assets in the region. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs has informed me that we are prepared to strike whenever we choose. Moreover, the Chairman has indicated to me that our capacity to execute this mission is not time sensitive; it will be effective tomorrow or next week or 1 month from now. And I'm prepared to give that order.

But having made my decision as Commander in Chief based on what I am convinced is our national security interests, I'm also mindful that I'm the President of the world's oldest constitutional democracy. I've long believed that our power is rooted not just in our military might, but in our example as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And that's why I've made a second decision: I will seek authorization for the use of force from the American people's representatives in Congress.

Over the last several days, we've heard from Members of Congress who want their voices to be heard. I absolutely agree. So this morning I spoke with all four congressional leaders, and they've agreed to schedule a debate and then a vote as soon as Congress comes back into session.

In the coming days, my administration stands ready to provide every Member with the information they need to understand what happened in Syria and why it has such profound implications for America's national security. And all of us should be accountable as we move forward, and that can only be accomplished with a vote.

I'm confident in the case our Government has made without waiting for U.N. inspectors. I'm comfortable going forward without the approval of a United Nations Security Council that, so far, has been completely paralyzed and unwilling to hold Asad accountable. As a consequence, many people have advised against taking this decision to Congress, and undoubtedly, they were impacted by what we saw happen in the United Kingdom this week when the Parliament of our closest ally failed to pass a resolution with a similar goal, even as the Prime Minister supported taking action.

Yet while I believe I have the authority to carry out this military action without specific congressional authorization, I know that the country will be stronger if we take this course, and our actions will be even more effective. We should have this debate, because the issues are too big for business as usual. And this morning, John Boehner, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi, and Mitch McConnell agreed that this is the right thing to do for our democracy.

A country faces few decisions as grave as using military force, even when that force is limited. I respect the views of those who call for caution, particularly as our country emerges from a time of war that I was elected, in part, to end. But if we really do want to turn away from taking appropriate action in the face of such an unspeakable outrage, then we must acknowledge the costs of doing nothing.

Here's my question for every Member of Congress and every member of the global community: What message will we send if a dictator can gas hundreds of children to death in plain sight and pay no price? What's the purpose of the international system that we've built if a prohibition on the use of chemical weapons that has been agreed to by the governments of 98 percent of the world's people and approved overwhelmingly by the Congress of the United States is not enforced?

Make no mistake, this has implications beyond chemical warfare. If we won't enforce accountability in the face of this heinous act, what does it say about our resolve to stand up to others who flout fundamental international rules? To governments who would choose to build nuclear arms? To terrorists who would spread biological weapons? To armies who carry out genocide? We cannot raise our children in a world where we will not follow through on the things we say, the accords we sign, the values that define us.

So just as I will take this case to Congress, I will also deliver this message to the world. While the U.N. investigation has some time to report on its findings, we will insist that an

atrocity committed with chemical weapons is not simply investigated, it must be confronted.

I don't expect every nation to agree with the decision we have made. Privately, we've heard many expressions of support from our friends. But I will ask those who care about the writ of the international community to stand publicly behind our action.

And finally, let me say this to the American people: I know well that we are weary of war. We've ended one war in Iraq. We're ending another in Afghanistan. And the American people have the good sense to know we cannot resolve the underlying conflict in Syria with our military. In that part of the world, there are ancient sectarian differences, and the hopes of the Arab Spring have unleashed forces of change that are going to take many years to resolve. And that's why we're not contemplating putting our troops in the middle of someone else's war.

Instead, we'll continue to support the Syrian people through our pressure on the Asad regime, our commitment to the opposition, our care for the displaced, and our pursuit of a political resolution that achieves a government that respects the dignity of its people.

But we are the United States of America, and we cannot and must not turn a blind eye to what happened in Damascus. Out of the ashes of world war, we built an international order and enforced the rules that gave it meaning. And we did so because we believe that the rights of individuals to live in peace and dignity depends on the responsibilities of nations. We aren't perfect, but this Nation more than any other has been willing to meet those responsibilities.

So to all Members of Congress of both parties, I ask you to take this vote for our national security. I am looking forward to the debate. And in doing so, I ask you, Members of Congress, to consider that some things are more important than partisan differences or the politics of the moment.

Ultimately, this is not about who occupies this office at any given time, it's about who we are as a country. I believe that the people's representatives must be invested in what America does abroad, and now is the time to show the world that America keeps our commitments. We do what we say. And we lead with the belief that right makes might, not the other way around.

We all know there are no easy options. But I wasn't elected to avoid hard decisions. And neither were the Members of the House and the Senate. I've told you what I believe, that our security and our values demand that we cannot turn away from the massacre of countless civilians with chemical weapons. And our democracy is stronger when the President and the people's representatives stand together.

I'm ready to act in the face of this outrage. Today I'm asking Congress to send a message to the world that we are ready to move forward together as one Nation.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting Draft Legislation Regarding Authorization for Use of United States Armed Forces in Connection With the Conflict in Syria

August 31, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I transmit herewith the attached draft legislation regarding Authorization for Use of United States Armed Forces in connection with the conflict in Syria.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of

Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The Office of the Press Secretary also released the text of the draft legislation.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders on the Situation in Syria and an Exchange With Reporters
September 3, 2013

The President. I want to thank the leaders of both parties for being here today to discuss what is a very serious issue facing the United States. And the fact that I've had a chance to speak to many of you and Congress as a whole is taking this issue with the soberness and seriousness that it deserves is greatly appreciated and, I think, vindicates the decision for us to present this issue to Congress.

As I've said last week, as Secretary Kerry made clear in his presentation last week, we have high confidence that Syria used, in an indiscriminate fashion, chemical weapons that killed thousands of people, including over 400 children, and in direct violation of the international norm against using chemical weapons. That poses a serious national security threat to the United States and to the region, and as a consequence, Asad and Syria needs to be held accountable.

I've made a decision that America should take action. But I also believe that we will be much more effective, we will be stronger, if we take action together as one Nation. And so this gives us an opportunity not only to present the evidence to all of the leading Members of Congress and their various foreign policy committees as to why we have high confidence that chemical weapons were used and that Asad used them, but it also gives us an opportunity to discuss why it's so important that he be held to account.

This norm against using chemical weapons that 98 percent of the world agrees to is there for a reason, because we recognize that there are certain weapons that, when used, can not only end up resulting in grotesque deaths, but also can end up being transmitted to nonstate actors, can pose a risk to allies and friends of ours like Israel, like Jordan, like Turkey, and unless we hold them into account, also sends a message that international norms around issues like nuclear proliferation don't mean much.

And so I'm going to be working with Congress. We have sent up a draft authorization. We are going to be asking for hearings and a prompt vote. And I'm very appreciative that everybody here has already begun to schedule hearings and intends to take a vote as soon as can—as all of Congress comes back early next week.

So the key point that I want to emphasize to the American people: The military plan that has been developed by our Joint Chiefs—and that I believe is appropriate—is proportional. It is limited. It does not involve boots on the ground. This is not Iraq, and this is not Afghanistan.

This is a limited, proportional step that will send a clear message not only to the Asad regime, but also to other countries that may be interested in testing some of these international norms, that there are consequences. It gives us the ability to degrade Asad's capabilities when it comes to chemical weapons. It also fits into a broader strategy that we have to make sure that we can bring about, over time, the kind of strengthening of the opposition and the diplomatic and economic and political pressure required so that ultimately we have a transition that can bring peace and stability not only to Syria, but to the region.

But I want to emphasize once again: What we are envisioning is something limited. It is something proportional. It will degrade Asad's capabilities. At the same time, we have a broader strategy that will allow us to upgrade the capabilities of the opposition, allow Syria ultimately to free itself from the kinds of terrible civil wars and death and activity that we've been seeing on the ground.

So I look forward to listening to the various concerns of the Members who are here today. I am confident that those concerns can be addressed. I think it is appropriate that we act deliberately, but I also think everybody recognizes the urgency here and that we're going to have to move relatively quickly.

So with that, to all of you here today, I look forward to an excellent discussion.

Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. Mr. President, are you prepared to rewrite the authorization, and does that undercut any of your authority, sir?

The President. I would not be going to Congress if I wasn't serious about consultations and believing that by shaping the authorization to make sure we accomplish the mission we will be more effective. And so long as we are accomplishing what needs to be accomplished, which is to send a clear message to Asad, degrading his capabilities to use chemical weapons, not just now, but also in the future, as long as the authorization allows us to do that, I'm confident that we're going to be able to come up with something that hits that mark.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden in Stockholm, Sweden
September 4, 2013

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. So it's a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome President Barack Obama to Sweden. As you all know, this is a historic event: the first bilateral visit ever by a President of United States to Sweden.

We have had a very constructive meeting. There are many reasons why the relationship between the United States and Sweden is special. Many Swedes emigrated to the United States at the end of the 19th century, and somewhere around 4 million Americans today claim Swedish heritage. Business ties flourish between our two countries. Sweden is, in fact, one of the largest investors per capita in the U.S., and we have considerable American investments in Sweden. The United States is the most important foreign employer in our country.

Our societies are founded on the same core values: democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law. All these values are at the heart of the deeds of Raoul Wallenberg, and I'm looking forward to the possibility to pay tribute to Raoul Wallenberg this afternoon, a man who chose not to be indifferent and who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.

United States and Sweden also share ambitions when it comes to the opening of global trade flows. Trade has laid the foundation of Sweden's wealth and prosperity. Around 50 percent of our GDP comes from exports, and Sweden strongly supports open trade regimes and in particular free trade agreement now being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. This will not only bring more jobs and growth to both our continents, it will also strengthen our political and economic partnership.

We also touched upon the economic situation in Europe and in the United States. I mentioned that the crisis has hit countries in Europe differently, Sweden being one of those countries that has done relatively well during the crisis. But the need for structural reforms exists throughout Europe to stay competitive and, at the same time, preserving all our welfare ambitions.

We have also discussed climate change and its consequences. It represents one of the most important challenges to our societies. Sweden

has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent since 1990, while GDP at the same time has increased by 60 percent. So there is no contradiction between economic growth and the protection of environment.

I welcome President Obama's ambitious new climate action plan. U.S. emissions have in recent years already fallen substantially, and your new plan will help United States to make even further reductions. We have agreed to work together in the international climate negotiations to make sure that other countries also are prepared to cut their emissions. This is the only way that we can protect our environment.

We have discussed a few foreign policy issues as well, the most topical, of course, being the situation in Syria. Sweden condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria in the strongest possible terms. It's a clear violation of international law. Those responsible should be held accountable. Sweden believes that serious matters concerning international peace and security should be handled by the United Nations. But I also understand the potential consequences of letting a violation like this go unanswered. In the long term, I know that we both agree that the situation in Syria needs a political solution.

So thank you once again, Mr. President, for coming to Sweden. I look forward to our program together this afternoon.

Please.

The President. Thank you so much. *Hej.* [*Laughter*] I've just exhausted my Swedish. [*Laughter*]

Thank you so much, Prime Minister Reinfeldt, for your very kind words and welcoming me today. I'm proud to be making the first-ever bilateral visit by a U.S. President to Sweden.

It's only been a short time, but I already want to thank all the people here for the warm hospitality that's been extended to me and my delegation. This is truly one of the world's great cities. It is spectacularly beautiful. The Prime Minister tells me that the weather is like this year round. [*Laughter*] And so like so many who have come here, I feel Stockholm in my heart, and I'm sure that I'll want to bring back my family to have a visit sometime in the future.

I've said before that it's no accident that democracies are America's closest partners. And that includes Sweden. That's why I'm here today. As free peoples, we recognize that democracy is the most effective form of government ever devised for delivering progress and opportunity and prosperity and freedom to people. And as two of the most innovative economies on Earth, we cherish that freedom that allows us to innovate and create, which is why we're leaders in science and research and development, those things that pioneers new industries and broaden our horizons.

We share a belief in the dignity and equality of every human being: that our daughters deserve the same opportunities as our sons; that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters must be treated equally under the law; that our societies are strengthened and not weakened by diversity. And we stand up for universal human rights, not only in America and in Europe, but beyond, because we believe that when these rights are respected, nations are more successful and our world is safer and more just.

So I want to thank Sweden and the Swedish people for being such strong partners in pursuit of these values that we share. The partnership is rooted in deep friendship, but as was also mentioned, we have very strong people-to-people ties. My hometown of Chicago has a lot of people from—of Swedish descent. Vice President Biden was honored to welcome King Gustaf and Queen Silvia to the United States earlier this year to mark the 375th anniversary of the first Swedish colony in America, and I'm looking forward to visiting with the King and Queen tomorrow.

I should mention on behalf of hockey fans back home in Chicago, I have to say how grateful our championship Blackhawks are for their several teammates who hail from Sweden. So that's been an excellent export that we gladly accept. [*Laughter*]

I had a chance to visit with Prime Minister Reinfeldt in the White House during my first year in office. And he has always proved to be a thoughtful and deliberative partner on a whole

host of international issues, and I'm pleased that we've been able to strengthen that partnership in our discussions here today.

We, of course, discussed the appalling violence being inflicted on the Syrian people by the Asad regime, including the horrific chemical weapons attacks 2 weeks ago. I discussed our assessment, which clearly implicates the Syrian Government in this outrage. The Prime Minister and I are in agreement that in the face of such barbarism the international community cannot be silent and that failing to respond to this attack would only increase the risk of more attacks and the possibility that other countries would use these weapons as well.

I respect—and I've said this to the Prime Minister—the U.N. process. Obviously, the U.N. investigation team has done heroic work under very difficult circumstances. But we believe very strongly, with high confidence, that, in fact, chemical weapons were used and that Mr. Asad was the source. And we want to join with the international community in an effective response that deters such use in the future.

So I updated the Prime Minister on our efforts to secure congressional authorization for taking action as well as our effort to continue to build international support for holding the Asad regime accountable in order to deter these kinds of attacks in the future.

And we also discussed our broader strategy. The United States and Sweden are both major donors of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. We will continue those efforts. We're going to continue to try to strengthen the capabilities of an inclusive and representative opposition and to support the diplomacy that could bring an end to all the violence and advance a political transition and a future in Syria where all people's rights are upheld. Those are goals that we share. And we will keep working towards those goals.

And more broadly, given Sweden's close partnership with NATO, we also touched on some of the other security challenges, and I expressed my appreciation for the extraordinary work that the Swedish Armed Forces has done in a whole range of issues, including Afghanistan, efforts to resolve some of the conflicts in central Eastern Europe, and the ongoing training that's also being provided and the good example that's being provided by Swedish Armed Forces here in Europe.

Mindful of the jobs that are supported by trade between our two countries, we discussed ways to partner more, including creating a clean energy partnership that creates jobs and combats climate change effectively. Sweden is obviously an extraordinary leader when it comes to tackling climate change and increasing energy efficiency and developing new technologies. And the goal of achieving a carbon-neutral economy is remarkable, and Sweden is well on its way. We deeply respect and admire that and think we can learn from it.

In the United States, we've taken some historic steps—doubling our electricity from wind and solar, improving the fuel efficiency of our cars, reducing our carbon pollution to the lowest levels in nearly 20 years—but we all know we need to do more. So my new climate action plan—more clean energy, more energy efficiency, less emissions—will allow us to do even more in the years to come. And we look forward to a close partnership with Sweden on what is going to be a global challenge. And at the Royal Institute of Technology today, I look forward to seeing some of the innovative ways that we can cooperate.

We also talked about trade and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T–TIP. I want to thank Sweden and the Prime Minister for the strong support of these negotiations, and I believe that for the U.S. and the EU to reach a high-standard, comprehensive agreement can create more jobs and opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic.

And as I head into the G–20, I shared my view that here in Europe and around the world, we've got to stay focused on creating jobs and growth. That's going to be critically important not only for our economies, but also to maintain stability in many of our democracies that are under severe stress at this point.

And finally, I want to salute Sweden, along with all the Nordic countries, for your strong

support for democracy and development: strengthening democratic governance in Eastern Europe; global efforts against AIDS, TB, and malaria; responsible development in Africa.

I want to thank in advance the Prime Minister for hosting our meeting tonight with the leaders of all the Nordic countries, and I look forward to our discussions.

So to Prime Minister Reinfeldt, thank you so much for your hospitality. To the people of Sweden, thank you. This is a wonderful visit, and I'm looking forward to it producing concrete results that will enhance the lives of both the American people and the people of Sweden.

So with that, I think we'll take some questions.

Moderator. Yes. We'll now open the floor for questions. The first question goes to Swedish News Agency—[*inaudible*].

Q. Mr. President, welcome to Sweden.

President Obama. Thank you.

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/President Obama's View of Swedish Society and Politics

Q. As you might know, the NSA surveillance affair has stirred up quite a few angry reactions, even here in Sweden. What do you want to say to those upset, and how do you think the affair affects the relationship between our countries? And as a follow-up to that, I know that in home—at home you are sometimes accused of wanting to turn the U.S. into Sweden. [*Laughter*] Now that you're here—you've been here for several hours—what have you seen? What actually inspires you? What do you want to import to the U.S. in terms of ideas for society?

President Obama. Well, let me take the NSA question first because this is a question that I've received in previous visits to Europe since the stories broke in the Guardian and I suspect I'll continue to get as I travel through Europe and around the world for quite some time.

Like other countries, we have an intelligence operation that tries to improve our understanding of what's happening around the world. And in light of 9/11, a lot of energy was focused on improving our intelligence when it came to combating terrorism.

And what I can say with confidence is that when it comes to our domestic operations, the concerns that people have back home in the United States of America—that we do not surveil the American people or persons within the United States, that there are a lot of checks and balances in place designed to avoid a surveillance state—there have been times where the procedures, because these are human endeavors, have not worked the way they should and we had to tighten them up. And I think there are legitimate questions that have been raised about the fact that as technology advances and capabilities grow, it may be that the laws that are currently in place are not sufficient to guard against the dangers of us being able to track so much.

Now, when it comes to intelligence gathering internationally, our focus is on counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction, cybersecurity: core national security interests of the United States. But what is true is, is that the United States has enormous capabilities when it comes to intelligence. One way to think about it is, in the same way that our military capabilities are significantly greater than many other countries, the same is true for our intelligence capabilities. So even though we may have the same goals, our means are significantly greater.

And I can give assurances to the publics in Europe and around the world that we're not going around snooping at people's e-mails or listening to their phone calls. What we try to do is to target very specifically areas of concern.

Having said that, what I've said domestically and what I say to international audiences is, with changes in technology, with the growth of our capabilities, if our attitude is, because we can do it, we should go ahead and do it, then we may not be addressing some of the legitimate concerns and dangers that exist any time we're talking about intelligence gathering and surveillance.

So what I've asked my national security team to do—as well as independent persons

who are well-known lawyers or civil libertarians or privacy experts to do—is to review everything that we're doing with the instructions to them that we have to balance the ends with the means. And just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should do it. And there may be situations in which we're gathering information just because we can that doesn't help us with our national security, but does raise questions in terms of whether we're tipping over into being too intrusive with respect to the interactions of other governments.

And that is something that we are currently reviewing carefully. We are consulting with the EU in this process. We are consulting with other countries in this process and finding out from them what are their areas of specific concern and trying to align what we do in a way that, I think, alleviates some of the public concerns that people may have.

But this is always going to be some—there's going to be some balancing that takes place on these issues. Some of the folks who have been most greatly offended publicly, we know, privately engage in the same activities directed at us or use information that we've obtained to protect their people. And we recognize that. But I think all of us have to take a very thoughtful approach to this problem. And I'm the first one to acknowledge that given advances in technology and the fact that so much of our information flow today is through the Internet, through wireless, that the risks of abuse are greater than they have been in the past.

Now, with respect to Sweden, I haven't had a chance to wander around Stockholm as much as I would like. It is a gorgeous country. What I know about Sweden, I think, offers us some good lessons. Number one, the work you've done on energy, I think, is something that the United States can and will learn from, because every country in the world right now has to recognize that if we're going to continue to grow, improve our standard of living while maintaining a sustainable planet, then we're going to have to change our patterns of energy use. And Sweden, I think, is far ahead of many other countries.

Sweden also has been able to have a robust market economy while recognizing that there are some investments in education or infrastructure or research that are important and there's no contradiction between making public investments and being a firm believer in free markets. And that's a debate and a discussion that we often have in the United States.

I have to say that if I were here in Europe, I'd probably be considered right in the middle, maybe center-left, maybe center-right, depending on the country. In the United States, sometimes, the names I'm called are quite different. [*Laughter*]

And I think a third observation and final observation I'd make is, though, I know that—I'm sure Fredrik doesn't feel this as he's engaging in difficult debates here—I do get a sense that the politics in Sweden right now involve both the ruling party and the opposition engaged in a respectful and rational debate that's based on facts and issues. And I think that kind of recognition that people can have political differences, but we're all trying to achieve the same goals, that's something that Swedes should be proud of and should try to maintain.

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. The first question from the American press goes to Steve Holland of Reuters.

Syria/Chemical Weapons/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, sir. Have you made up your mind whether to take action against Syria whether or not you have a congressional resolution approved? Is a strike needed in order to preserve your credibility for when you set these sort of red lines? And were you able to enlist the support of the Prime Minister here for support in Syria?

President Obama. Let me unpack the question. First of all, I didn't set a red line, the world set a red line. The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use even when countries are engaged in war.

Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated that—in a piece of legislation titled the Syria Accountability Act—that some of the horrendous things that are happening on the ground there need to be answered for.

And so when I said in a press conference that my calculus about what's happening in Syria would be altered by the use of the chemical weapons, which the overwhelming consensus of humanity says is wrong, that wasn't something I just, kind of, made up. I didn't pluck it out of thin air. There's a reason for it. So that's point number one.

Point number two: My credibility is not on the line, the international community's credibility is on the line. And America and Congress's credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important.

And when those videos first broke and you saw images of over 400 children subjected to gas, everybody expressed outrage: How can this happen in this modern world? Well, it happened because a government chose to deploy these deadly weapons on civilian populations. And so the question is, how credible is the international community when it says this is an international norm that has to be observed? The question is, how credible is Congress when it passes a treaty saying we have to forbid the use of chemical weapons?

And I do think that we have to act, because if we don't, we are effectively saying that even though we may condemn it and issue resolutions and so forth and so on, somebody who is not shamed by resolutions can continue to act with impunity. And those international norms begin to erode. And other despots and authoritarian regimes can start looking and saying, that's something we can get away with. And that then calls into question other international norms and laws of war and whether those are going to be enforced.

So, as I told the Prime Minister, I am very respectful of the U.N. investigators who went in at great danger to try to gather evidence about what happened. We want more information, not less. But when I said that I have high confidence that chemical weapons were used and that the Asad Government—through their chain of command—ordered their use, that was based on both public sourcing, intercepts, evidence that we feel very confident about, including samples that have been tested showing sarin from individuals who were there.

And I'm very mindful of the fact that around the world—and here in Europe in particular—there are still memories of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction accusations and people being concerned about how accurate this information is. Keep in mind, I'm somebody who opposed the war in Iraq, and I am not interested in repeating mistakes of us basing decisions on faulty intelligence.

But having done a thoroughgoing evaluation of the information that is currently available, I can say with high confidence chemical weapons were used. And by the way, Iran doesn't deny it. Even Syria doesn't actually deny that they were used. And that is what the U.N. investigators are supposed to be determining. And frankly, nobody is really disputing that chemical weapons were used. The only remaining dispute is who used them, which is outside the parameters of the U.N. investigation. So the U.N. investigation will not be able to answer that preliminarily; they're not supposed to.

But what we know is, is that the opposition doesn't have the capability to deliver weapons on this scale. These weapons are in Asad's possession. We have intercepts indicating people in the chain of command, both before and after the attacks, with knowledge of these attacks. We can show that the rockets that delivered these chemical weapons went from areas controlled by Asad into these areas where the opposition was lodged. And the accumulation of evidence gives us high confidence that Asad carried this out.

And so the question is, after we've gone through all this, are we going to try to find a reason not to act? And if that's the case, then I think the world community should admit it. Because you can always find a reason not to act. This is a complicated, difficult situation. And an initial response will not solve the un-

derlying tragedy of the civil war in Syria. As Fredrik mentioned, that will be solved through, eventually, a political transition.

But we can send a very clear, strong message against the prohibition—or in favor of the prohibition against using chemical weapons. We can change Asad's calculus about using them again. We can degrade his capabilities so that he does not use them again. And so what I'm talking about is an action that is limited in time and in scope, targeted at the specific task of degrading his capabilities and deterring the use of those weapons again.

And in the meantime, we will continue to engage the entire international community in trying to find a solution to the underlying problems, which brings me to the last question. And that is, what happens if Congress doesn't approve it? I believe that Congress will approve it. I believe Congress will approve it because I think America recognizes that, as difficult as it is to take any military action—even one as limited as we're talking about, even one without boots on the ground—that's a sober decision.

But I think America also recognizes that if the international community fails to maintain certain norms, standards, laws governing how countries interact and how people are treated, that over time, this world becomes less safe. It becomes more dangerous not only for those people who are subjected to these horrible crimes, but to all of humanity. And we've seen that happen again and again in our history. And the people of Europe are certainly familiar with what happens when the international community finds excuses not to act.

And I would not have taken this before Congress just as a symbolic gesture. I think it's very important that Congress say that we mean what we say. And I think we will be stronger as a country in our response if the President and Congress does it together.

As Commander in Chief, I always preserve the right and the responsibility to act on behalf of America's national security. I do not believe that I was required to take this to Congress. But I did not take this to Congress just because it's an empty exercise; I think it's important to have Congress's support on it. Okay?

Nobel Peace Prize/Syria

Moderator. And the next Swedish question goes to Swedish National Television—[*inaudible*].

Q. Mr. President, you've given very eloquent talks about the moral force of nonviolence. I was wondering, could you describe the dilemma to be a Nobel Peace Prize winner and getting ready to attack Syria? And also, in what way did the talk that you had today with Prime Minister Reinfeldt move the world a step closer to resolving the climate crisis?

President Obama. I would refer you to the speech that I gave when I received the Nobel Prize. And I think I started the speech by saying that, compared to previous recipients, I was certainly unworthy. But what I also described was the challenge that all of us face when we believe in peace, but we confront a world that is full of violence and occasional evil. And the question then becomes, what are our responsibilities?

So I've made every effort to end the war in Iraq, to wind down the war in Afghanistan, to strengthen our commitment to multilateral action, to promote diplomacy as the solution to problems. The question, though, that all of us face—not just me, our citizens face, not just political leaders—is at what point do we say we need to confront actions that are violating our common humanity?

And I would argue that when I see 400 children subjected to gas, over 1,400 innocent civilians dying senselessly in an environment in which you already have tens of thousands dying, and we have the opportunity to take some action that is meaningful, even if it doesn't solve the entire problem, may at least mitigate this particular problem, then the moral thing to do is not to stand by and do nothing.

But it's difficult. This is the part of my job that I find most challenging every single day. I would much rather spend my time talking about how to make sure every 3- and 4-year-old gets a good education than I would spending time thinking about how can I prevent 3- and 4-year-olds from

being subjected to chemical weapons and nerve gas.

Unfortunately, that's sometimes the decisions that I'm confronted with as President of the United States. And frankly, as President of the United States, I can't avoid those questions because, as much as we are criticized, when bad stuff happens around the world, the first question is, what is the United States going to do about it? That's true on every issue. It's true in Libya. It's true in Rwanda. It's true in Sierra Leone. It's now true in Syria. That's part of the deal.

What was the second question?

Climate Change

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Climate change.

Q. Climate change.

President Obama. I think we have great opportunities. I think this is a good chance for Fredrik to talk about our shared views here, because we have, I think, a joint belief that developed countries have to make progress, but we have to have an international framework to address where the increases in emissions are now occurring.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Okay, well, I totally agree to that. I think it's been a very interesting developing—development after Copenhagen. I learned to—we were both present in Copenhagen, but we were saying that U.S. had the highest emissions in the world and that China was catching up. Now, only a few years later, we have a situation where China is now doubled the emissions of the ones we have in U.S. This is actually reshaping the situation when it comes to climate protection.

We are both responsible for lowering our emissions, and we are doing so. But what we have—we must also face the fact that we very soon have a situation where 25 percent of the global emissions is from European Union and United States together. So the world can't say, "solve it," pointing at a quarter. They need to take in the 75 percent outside of European Union and United States. That is our problem. We want to deal with this, but it has to be a global answer.

Press Secretary Carney. Final question goes to Margaret Talev of Bloomberg News.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, tomorrow you'll see President Putin at the G–20. With Russia and U.S. relations seriously strained, do you see value in trying to persuade him still to drop opposition to a Syrian strike, or are you—are your efforts now in that excluding Russia from the decision? And looking back at your hopes for a reset, do you believe that you overestimated what you could change? Or do you believe that Mr. Putin changed the rules midway? If you will indulge me, I have one more, but it's all related.

President Obama. I will indulge you——

Q. Thank you.

President Obama. ——to let you answer—ask the question. I may not answer it, but go ahead.

Q. Could you take us behind the scenes on that 45-minute walk around the South Lawn where you changed your mind and decided to take this before Congress?

And, Mr. Prime Minister——

President Obama. Oh, goodness! Margaret, you're really pressing things now. [*Laughter*] So this is question number four now.

Q. No, this is for the Prime Minister.

President Obama. Okay.

Q. You have expressed some doubts about military action in Syria, and I'm wondering if you could be a little bit more specific about what your concerned the consequences may be and whether you believe that President Putin has any—shares any burden of the responsibility for Mr. Asad's actions. Thank you.

President Obama. Okay. I mean, I'm just going to try to remember all this. [*Laughter*]

First of all, the reset in the Russian relationship was not done on a whim. There were specific U.S. interests that I believed we could pursue with Russia, where interests overlapped, that would help us both on our long-term national security and our economy. And we succeeded. We succeeded in passing a New

START Treaty that reduced nuclear stockpiles for both the United States and Russia. Russia joined the WTO, which bound them to a set of international rules governing trade, which, I think, ultimately will be good for the Russian economy, but is also good for its trading partners and potential companies that are investing in Russia, and that includes U.S. companies.

We work together on counterterrorism issues. They have provided us significant assistance in supplying our troops in Afghanistan. There were a whole host of outcomes from that reset that were valuable to the United States.

Now, there's no doubt that, as I indicated a while back, we've kind of hit a wall in terms of additional progress. But I have not written off the idea that the United States and Russia are going to continue to have common interests even as we have some very profound differences on some other issues. And where our interests overlap, we should pursue common action. Where we've got differences, we should be candid about them, try to manage those differences but not sugarcoat them.

One area where we've got a significant difference right now is the situation in Syria. Russia has a longstanding relationship with the Asad regime, and as a consequence, it has been very difficult to get Russia—working through the Security Council—to acknowledge some of the terrible behavior of the Asad regime and to try to push towards the kind of political transition that's needed in order to stabilize Syria.

And I've said to Mr. Putin directly, and I continue to believe that even if you have great concerns about elements in the opposition—and we've got some concerns about certain elements of the opposition like al-Nusra—and even if you're concerned about the territorial integrity of Syria—and we're concerned about the territorial integrity of Syria—if you, in fact, want to end the violence and slaughter inside of Syria, then you're going to have to have a political transition. Because it is not possible for Mr. Asad to regain legitimacy in a country where he's killed tens of thousands of his own people. That will not happen. So far, at least, Mr. Putin has rejected that logic.

As far as security action—Security Council action, we have gone repeatedly to the Security Council for even the most modest of resolutions condemning some of the actions that have taken place there, and it has been resisted by Russia.

And do I hold out hope that Mr. Putin may change his position on some of these issues? I'm always hopeful. And I will continue to engage him because I think that international action would be much more effective and, ultimately, we can end deaths much more rapidly if Russia takes a different approach to these problems.

In terms of my decision to take the issue to Congress, this had been brewing in my mind for a while. Some people have noted—and I think this is true—that had I been in the Senate in the midst of this period, I probably would have suggested to a Democratic or a Republican President that Congress should have the ability to weigh in on an issue like this that is not immediate, imminent, time sensitive. When the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Mr. Dempsey, indicated to me that whether we struck today, tomorrow, or a month from now, we could still do so effectively, then I think that raised the question of, why not ask Congress to debate this in a serious way?

Because I do think it raises issues that are going to occur for us and for the international community for many years to come. I mean, the truth of the matter is, is that under international law, Security Council resolution or self-defense or defense of an ally provides a clear basis for action. But increasingly, what we're going to be confronted with are situations like Syria, like Kosovo, like Rwanda, in which we may not always have a Security Council that can act—it may be paralyzed for a whole host of reasons—and yet we've got all these international norms that we're interested in upholding. We may not be directly, imminently threatened by what's taking place in a Kosovo or a Syria or a Rwanda in the short term, but our long-term national security will be impacted in a profound way, and our humanity is impacted in a profound way.

And so I think it's important for us to get out of the habit in those circumstances—again, I'm not talking about circumstances where our national security is directly impacted, we've been attacked, et cetera, where the President has to act quickly—but in circumstances of the type that I describe, it's important for us to get out of the habit of just saying, well, we'll let the President kind of stretch the boundaries of his authority as far as he can; Congress will sit on the sidelines, snipe. If it works, the sniping will be a little less; if it doesn't, a little more. But either way, the American people and their representatives are not fully invested in what are tough choices.

And we as a country and the world are going to start—have to take tough choices. I do get frustrated, although I'm under—I understand how complex this is, and any time you're involving military action, then people will ask, well, this may do more harm than good. I understand those arguments; I wrestle with them every day. But I do have to ask people, well, if, in fact, you're outraged by the slaughter of innocent people, what are you doing about it?

And if the answer is, "Well, we should engage diplomatically," well, we've engaged diplomatically. The answer is, "Well, we should shine the spotlight and shame these governments," well, these governments oftentimes show no shame. "Well, we should act internationally." Well, sometimes, because of the various alignments, it's hard to act through a Security Council resolution.

And so either we resign ourselves to saying there's nothing we can do about it, and we'll just shake our heads and go about our business, or we make decisions even when they're difficult. And I think this is an example of where we need to take—make decisions even though they're difficult. And I think it's important for Congress to be involved in that decision.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. I think I should answer the question. I think you're right in saying that this is a very difficult decision to take and, as always, it's a balancing act. And we've been discussing this during our talks.

Just to remind you, you're now in Sweden, a small country with a deep belief in the United Nations. You're also in a country where, I think yesterday or the day before, we took the decision that all the people that are now coming from the war in Syria are allowed to stay permanently in Sweden. So a lot of the people following this press conference here in Sweden are actually just now coming from Syria and, of course, wondering what is the view of their country. And they have a lot of their countrymen also in this country, so we have a lot of roots and links to Syria.

I think the main problem has been for 2½ years now that we have a war without a clear political solution. And that, at the end of the day, must be—we must get a cease-fire. We must get a peace process. We must get people to talk to each other.

I totally understand the complex situation also on the opposition, because we have part of the opposition also here in Sweden, which is now conducted of different groups. They want to get Asad out of the picture, but what do they want instead? That is, of course, a question we need to attend to.

The weapons inspector that was present in Damascus is headed by a Swede. So in this country, of course, we are asking for the time to be able to see what were their findings, especially since President Obama has sent the decision also to Congress. We think that that gives us some more time, and we are welcoming that.

Having said that, I also said I understand the absolute problem of not having a reaction to use of chemical weapons and what kind of signal that sends to the world in a time where we are developing our view on international law, not saying that you're allowed to do whatever you like to your own people as long as it's inside your own borders, no. We have these—we need to protect people. We need to look at the interest of each and every one. So this is the development we are seeing. That's the same discussion we are having in Sweden.

So I need—I understand, especially the U.S. President needs to react; otherwise he will get another kind of discussion. But this small country will always say, let's put our hope into the United Nations. Let us push on some more to get a better situation.

Of course, President Putin has a responsibility in that. Of course. Because everyone understands that Russia and also China has been outside of the decisionmaking that we would have needed a long time ago to put more clear pressure and more political solution.

So that is what we have been discussing today. If you balance all these sentences, that shows how difficult this is.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:45 p.m. at the Rosenbad building. In his remarks, Prime Minister Reinfeldt referred to Ake Sellström, chief scientist of the United Nations chemical weapons inspection team sent to Syria on behalf of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden

September 4, 2013

Sweden and the United States are very special friends. Today we reaffirmed the dedication of the Kingdom of Sweden and the United States of America to enhance our cooperation across the full range of shared economic, environmental, and security challenges. We agreed that our close cooperation, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, is derived from shared values such as democracy, the respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

This is a special year in the relationship between Sweden and the United States, as it marks 375 years since the establishment of the first Swedish settlement "New Sweden" in the United States and 230 years since the first free trade agreement between our countries was signed. Today over four million Americans claim Swedish heritage. Business ties flourish between our countries. And our work together around the world magnifies the positive impact we can have when facing common challenges in pursuit of our shared agenda.

We confirmed our determination to continue to promote growth and jobs, counter climate change and accelerate the transition to a sustainable energy future, expand trade and investment, work for international peace and security, and promote global development, conflict prevention, and disarmament. President Obama expressed his appreciation to the Prime Minister for arranging the dinner with regional leaders, allowing for consultations with Nordic colleagues on a number of shared challenges.

We looked forward to the opportunity to commemorate Raoul Wallenberg this afternoon and pay tribute to a man who chose not to be indifferent and to rise to a higher moral calling. We remember and revere Raoul Wallenberg and his courageous deeds saving thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.

We noted that climate change and its consequences are defining challenges of our time. The United States and Sweden are determined to take actions to counter climate change and promote clean energy, domestically and internationally, including through the UN climate negotiations, while driving continued economic growth.

Today we reinforced our support for the efforts of the Swedish-American Green Alliance (SAGA) to further enhance our cooperation to enable the transition to a sustainable energy future. The priorities of SAGA are developing smart grids to ensure efficient transmission of electricity, developing renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, developing sustainable cities, and cooperation to facilitate innovation and commercialization of sustainable energy technologies. As founding members of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, Sweden and the United States are pleased that the Coalition, as a complement to the work on long-lived climate pollutants, is already working to catalyze significant global

reductions of short-lived climate pollutants. We agreed to redouble our efforts and invite others to join to take full advantage of the Coalition's potential, including through innovative approaches to financing methane abatement.

Sweden and the United States share a commitment to promoting growth and jobs through actions to strengthen global demand. Fiscal strategies should be adapted to economic conditions and to available fiscal space. We share a commitment to advancing financial reform to build a more resilient global financial system.

We discussed the significance of the launch of the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T–TIP). T–TIP aims to boost economic growth in the United States and in the EU and add to the more than 13 million American and EU jobs already supported by transatlantic trade and investment. We also reaffirmed our support for the multilateral trading system through our efforts within the WTO to liberalize trade in services and environmental goods and to strengthen trade facilitation. This will not only bring new jobs and growth to both continents, but also even further strengthen the political and economic partnership. Global economic recovery, growth, and combating poverty are shared goals. To achieve these goals, Sweden and the United States agree on the importance of further trade liberalisation and opening of markets.

Sweden and the United States stress the importance of the work of the Arctic Council. We look forward to increasing our cooperation to protect and conduct research on the Arctic environment, improving living conditions, and encouraging sustainable development in the Arctic, particularly with respect to indigenous communities.

We reiterated our determination to continue working together to promote peace and security around the world. Our cooperation within the United Nations on peacekeeping, as well as partnership in NATO-led missions such as ISAF and KFOR, contribute to a more peaceful, secure world. We are committed to developing the relationship between NATO and Partner countries further. Sweden and the United States are leaders in advancing the critical role of women in achieving international peace and security. Sweden has generously offered the Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations for NATO use, and the United States has committed to provide support for the center's training and education efforts.

We reaffirmed our commitment to seeking a world without nuclear weapons, supporting ongoing efforts on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. We welcome the achievements made through the Nuclear Security Summits to secure nuclear material and reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism.

We agreed that development and humanitarian aid are strategic, economic, and moral imperatives. We are committed to aggressive efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals before 2015. Achieving real results in people's lives constitutes our greatest chance to make a difference. We will reinforce our efforts to improve child and maternal health. We recognize that the eradication of extreme poverty is the core of our future global development. We envision a common post-2015 agenda that sets clear, ambitious, and measurable goals to meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of the eight billion people who will inhabit the planet by 2030.

We affirmed our joint commitment to protect the human rights of LGBT persons globally through support to the Global Equality Fund. Launched in 2011, the Fund assists civil society organizations in over 25 countries worldwide. The United States and Sweden are each preparing a $6 million contribution of new resources to support the Fund over three years, totaling a $12 million commitment.

We emphasized our support for the EU's Eastern Partnership as a means to help address economic challenges in the region, promote the EU integration of the Eastern European partner countries, and develop democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law.

We recognized the importance of regional cooperation, including with the Baltic states.

Sweden and the United States are continuing our collaboration on other common foreign policy areas. Today we have, among other things, discussed the situations in Syria and Egypt. We are determined to work together to promote respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Egypt. With regard to the situation in Syria, we strongly condemn any and all use of chemical weapons. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

We share the goal of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, resulting in two independent and democratic states living side by side in peace and security. Sweden and the United States welcome and support the decision by Israel and the Palestinians to resume final status negotiations, and encourage the parties to continue engaging in good faith negotiations towards this shared goal.

We remain gravely concerned about Iran's nuclear program and urge Iran to comply with all its international obligations, including full implementation by Iran of UN Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors resolutions. We reaffirm our commitment to work toward a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in accordance with the dual track approach.

We urge North Korea to deescalate tensions on the Korean peninsula, commit to irreversible steps leading to denuclearization, and comply with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and other international agreements. President Obama expressed his gratitude to the Kingdom of Sweden for serving as the United States' protecting power in North Korea.

This historic first bilateral visit of an American president to Sweden underscores not only the importance of the U.S.-Sweden relationship, but also the bonds between the United States and all the Nordic countries and the globally significant relationship between America and Europe.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at the Great Synagogue in Stockholm, Sweden
September 4, 2013

Good afternoon. I want to thank Prime Minister Reinfeldt, Lena Posner-Körösi, and Rabbi Narrowe for welcoming me here to the Great Synagogue, the heart of the Jewish community here in Stockholm.

This evening is the first night of the Jewish High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah. For our Jewish friends, it's a time of joy and celebration, to give thanks for our blessings, and to look ahead to the coming year. So to all our Jewish friends here in Sweden, in the United States, and around the world, especially in Israel, I want to wish you and your families a sweet and happy New Year. *Shana Tova.*

Days such as this are a time of reflection, an occasion to consider not just our relationship with God, but our relationship with each other as human beings. We're reminded of our basic obligations: to recognize ourselves in each other, to treat one another with compassion, to reach out to the less fortunate among us, to do our part to help repair our world. These values are at the heart of the great partnership between Sweden and the United States. And these values defined the life of the man we remember today: Raoul Wallenberg.

Now, last year we marked the 100th anniversary of Wallenberg's birth, and I was proud to send my greetings to your ceremony here in Stockholm. Today we're honored to be joined by those who loved him and whose lives he touched: members of the Wallenberg family, including his half-sister Nina and the family of his late half-brother Guy; Wallenberg's colleague, Gabriella Kassius; and some of the countless men and women whom Wallenberg saved from the Holocaust.

We just had a wonderful visit together. They showed me some incredible artifacts, some of the Swedish passports Wallenberg used to protect Jews in Budapest. I saw his diary, his own passport, including a picture of him as he was

and as he will always remain: young and determined and full of energy and an enormous heart. And I'm here today because, as Americans, we cherish our ties to Wallenberg as well.

He was a son of Sweden, but he also studied in America. I know he spent most of his time in Ann Arbor, but my understanding is, he spent some time in my hometown of Chicago as well. He could have remained in the comfort of Stockholm, but he went to Nazi-occupied Hungary in partnership with the U.S. War Refugee Board. To this day, schools and streets in America bear his name, and he is one of only a few individuals ever granted honorary U.S. citizenship. So he's beloved in both our countries; he's one of the links that bind us together.

Wallenberg's life is a challenge to us all to live those virtues of empathy and compassion, even when it's hard, even when it involves great risk. He came from a prominent family, but he chose to help the most vulnerable. He was a Lutheran, and yet he risked his lives to save Jews. "I will never be able to go back to Stockholm," he said, "without knowing inside myself I'd done all a man could do to save as many Jews as possible."

So when Jews in Budapest were marked with that yellow star, Wallenberg shielded them behind the blue and yellow of the Swedish flag. When they were forced into death marches, he showed up with the food and water that gave them life. When they were loaded on trains for the camps, he climbed on board too and pulled them off. He lived out one of the most important *mitzvots*—most important commandments—in the Jewish tradition: to redeem a captive; to save a life; the belief that when a neighbor is suffering, we cannot stand idly by.

And because he refused to stand by, Wallenberg reminds us of our power when we choose not simply to bear witness, but also to act: the tens of thousands he saved from the camps; the estimated 100,000 Jews of Budapest who survived the war, in no small measure because of this man and those like Gabriella who risked their lives as well. It also calls to mind the compassion of Swedes who helped to rescue so many Jews from Denmark 70 years ago this year. And this legacy shines bright in the survivors who are here today and in the family trees that have continued to grow ever since, children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren who owe their very existence to a Swedish hero that they never knew.

I cannot think of a better tribute to Raoul Wallenberg than for each of us—as individuals and as nations—to reaffirm our determination to live the values that defined his life and to make the same choice in our time. And so today we say that we will make a habit of empathy. We will stand against anti-Semitism and hatred in all its forms. We will choose to recognize the beauty and dignity and worth of every person and every child. And we will choose to instill in the hearts of our own children the love and tolerance and compassion that we seek.

One of those whom Wallenberg saved later told this story. He was a young boy in hiding when they came for the women, including his mother. And "my mother kissed me," he said, "and I cried and she cried. And we knew we were parting forever." But then, "2 or 3 hours later, to my amazement, my mother returned with the other women, and it seemed like a mirage, a miracle. My mother was there. She was alive and she was hugging me and kissing me, and she said one word: Wallenberg."

Today we stand in awe of the courage of one man who earned his place in the Righteous Among the Nations. And we pray for the day when all peoples and nations find the same strength: to recognize the humanity that we share and to summon in our own lives our capacity for good, to live with tolerance and respect, to treat everyone with dignity, and to provide our children with the peace that they deserve.

So thank you very much. It is a great honor to be here today. And on behalf of the American people, we want to say to the Wallenberg family how truly inspired and grateful we are for all that he did. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lena Posner-Körösi, president, Official Council of Jewish Communities in Sweden.

Joint Statement by the United States, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden

September 4, 2013

The Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Finland, Republic of Iceland, Kingdom of Norway, Kingdom of Sweden, and the United States of America reaffirm our deep partnership based on shared fundamental values including our commitment to democracy, human rights, respect for the rule of law, and economic freedom. We continue to deepen our collaboration on important shared global priorities, including climate change and clean energy, the Arctic, a strong, open multilateral trading system, emerging security challenges, global development and humanitarian assistance, and Europe's regional economic and security environment. This evening, we have come together at a defining moment in the transatlantic relationship to discuss our long-term goals in each of these areas and agree to take concrete steps to achieve those goals.

United on Global Issues

The United States and the Nordic countries share the goal of a stable and peaceful Middle East. We agree that all relevant parties must work urgently for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We are determined to work together to promote respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Egypt. With regard to the situation in Syria, we strongly condemn any and all use of chemical weapons, and we are convinced a strong international reaction is required. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

We recognize the importance of cooperation between our countries in building comprehensive security and addressing security issues in the 21st century, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illicit international arms trade, and threats to cyber security. We also recognize that we must address these challenges in a manner that respects our most cherished values and protects universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are at the foundation of all flourishing democracies. We note the need to continue to strengthen our countries' important contributions to regional, transatlantic, and international forums, including in the EU, NATO, and NATO Partnership context. We recommit to continuing and expanding our security, recognizing that this cooperation—with and among the Nordic countries, with other regional partners, including especially the Baltic states, and in transatlantic and international fora—will be crucial to our success.

To complement our already robust bilateral and regional security cooperation, we agree to launch a U.S.-Nordic Security Dialogue, which will meet annually to discuss opportunities for collaboration on global and regional security issues, focusing primarily on issues arising in the United Nations, including an integrated approach to preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and atrocity prevention. Another stream of work will include joint capacity building efforts to promote stabilization in fragile and conflict affected states—linking up security and development efforts, and civilian and military partners.

Recognizing that we still have work to do closer to home, we agree on our mutual commitment to deepening regional cooperation and continuing to pursue our common vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

We underscore the importance of actions that can support a global economic recovery, including the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T–TIP) currently being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. T–TIP aims to boost economic growth in the United States and the EU and add to the more than 13 million American and EU jobs already supported by transatlantic trade and investment. We also look forward to exploring ways we can bolster trade and investment between the United States and Norway and Iceland. We also emphasize our commitment to achieving significant and substantive

outcomes at the 9th World Trade Organization Ministerial.

We agree that the fight against tax avoidance and evasion should be a top priority in all relevant international fora. We support the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's on base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) and automatic exchange of information as the new global standard. The engagement of the G–20 in these issues is important. The misuse of shell companies can be a severe impediment to sustainable economic growth and sound governance. We will make a concerted and collective effort to tackle this issue and improve the transparency of companies and legal arrangements.

Partnering on Climate Change and the Arctic

Climate change is one of the foremost challenges for our future economic growth and well-being. We underscore the importance of continuing to encourage innovative approaches to promoting energy efficiency and clean energy, including renewables, and of taking action on climate change, domestically and internationally. This requires mobilizing scaled up climate finance. We agreed on the importance of reaching an ambitious, comprehensive, fair, and inclusive climate agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015 that is consistent with science, mindful of the two degree target, and applicable to all.

As part of our commitment to accelerating the transition to low-carbon energy systems worldwide, the leaders of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden will join the United States in ending public financing for new coal-fired power plants overseas, except in rare circumstances. We will work together to secure the support of other countries and multilateral development banks to adopt similar policies. The Nordic countries and the United States agreed to continue their work, in all appropriate channels, to reduce the use of domestic fossil fuel subsidies globally. The United States also agrees to join with the Nordic members of the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform to undertake peer reviews of domestic fossil fuel subsidies.

Recognizing the rapid growth of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition over its first 18 months, we note the potential of the Coalition to catalyze significant global reductions of short-lived climate pollutants, which have major impacts on climate change and public health. The U.S. and Nordic members of the Coalition agree to intensify our efforts and invite others to join to take full advantage of the Coalition's potential.

The United States and Nordic members of the Clean Energy Ministerial continue to support various ministerial initiatives, including the 21st Century Power Partnership, which brings together government and private sector actors to help identify and promote successful technical, policy, and financial pathways to cleaner and more efficient power systems in both developed and developing countries. Additionally, the United States and Nordic countries expressed our support for the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative of the UN Secretary-General.

We recommit to protecting the Arctic environment, working to improve living conditions and encouraging sustainable development in the Arctic region, particularly with respect to indigenous peoples, and ensuring that the Arctic remains a peaceful region of cooperation. We will pursue opportunities in future Arctic Council meetings and other international fora to promote prosperity, foster scientific cooperation, and reduce emissions of black carbon in the Arctic region, as agreed upon in the Kiruna Declaration.

Advancing Global Development

As leaders in providing development assistance, we agree on the strategic, economic, and moral imperative of global development and humanitarian aid. We are committed to aggressive efforts to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs continue to be a symbol of our common humanity and a statement of the world's commitment to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, combating disease,

achieving gender equality, free quality education for all, and environmental sustainability, thus extending hope and opportunity to billions across the world. We note the opportunities for using trade to boost economic growth and reduce poverty in developing countries, as well as the importance of promoting human rights and gender equality. In addition, we agree that vaccination through GAVI represents one of the most cost-effective approaches to save children's lives and that with enhanced efforts, polio can be eradicated within this decade. Together, we envision a unified post-2015 agenda that addresses poverty, inclusive growth, and sustainability in clear, ambitious, and measurable goals.

The United States and Nordic countries are critical donors in fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria worldwide. We commend the reforms and results achieved by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria and will work together to ensure a successful replenishment. In a demonstration of strong leadership, a number of Nordic countries are together pledging $750 million, with over $150 million in increased funds, for the Global Fund replenishment, subject to parliamentary approval. This funding will leverage $375 million from the U.S. challenge pledge of $1 for every $2 donated. These historic multilateral investments will work to turn the tide against these three devastating diseases.

Access to electricity continues to be one of the most significant hurdles to economic growth and development. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, more than two-thirds of the population is without access to power. To support a doubling of electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa the United States and Nordic countries have expressed our support for the Power Africa initiative and agree to work together to provide technical assistance, financing, and other support to enable additional investment in energy projects throughout the region.

In support of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), we agree to promote transparency and accountability of expenditures and revenues related to the extraction of natural resources, including through support to the multi-donor trust fund for EITI or the EITI Secretariat. EU member states Denmark, Finland, and Sweden intend to quickly transpose the EU Accounting and Transparency Directive, which requires mandatory disclosures of payments made to governments for extractive and logging projects.

Protecting Human Rights and Strengthening Governance

We will work together to eradicate poverty, promote good governance and human rights, combat all forms of trafficking in persons, and strengthen gender equality and the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We agree to make real our respective obligations and commitments to promote and protect women's human rights and fundamental freedoms as outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, and other international instruments and agreements on women's rights. We note in particular the importance of empowering women as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace and ensuring their protection from violence, and of our continued bilateral and multilateral engagement to this end in such countries as Afghanistan and Pakistan and in the Middle East. In Afghanistan, for example, we endorse such flagship initiatives as PROMOTE, UN Women's Elimination of Violence against Women Special Fund, the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund's EQUIP, and the National Solidarity Program's Community Development Councils, which together empower a critical mass of Afghan women to fully participate in Afghan society.

We strengthen our commitments to advance equality and dignity for LGBT persons through the Global Equality Fund. This commitment reflects an increasingly growing global sentiment that all persons should be treated equally and with dignity regardless of who they are or who they love.

The United States and Nordic members of the Open Government Partnership, a multilateral initiative that asks governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and strengthen governance, agree to redouble our efforts to develop ambitious "Race to the Top" commitments for the October 31 Open Government Partnership Ministerial.

Working together, we have a historic opportunity to make progress on issues of global significance, and we remain steadfast in our dedication to the pursuit of these goals.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan in St. Petersburg, Russia
September 5, 2013

Prime Minister Abe. It is my great pleasure to have a bilateral meeting on the occasion of G–20 today. Also, it was extremely meaningful for both of us to have a telephone conversation to discuss the situation in Syria. I certainly look forward to continuously and closely working with you to improve the situation on the ground.

And also, since my last visit to the United States back in February, I have made firm decisions on major issues in our bilateral contacts, including TPP issue.

We had a major victory in the upper house election back in July. Therefore, we now have the stable foundation as an administration, and I certainly look forward to addressing economic issues such as achieving economic growth and also addressing security issues.

And also, with regard to our joint endeavor to address these challenges, I would like to talk about mid- to long-term perspective and also direction of our collaboration.

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to see Prime Minister Abe and his delegation again. As I've said before, the U.S.-Japan alliance is one of the cornerstones not just of Japan's and America's security, but also a cornerstone for peace and security around the world.

Here at the G–20, our primary purpose is to focus on the economy and how we can improve the world's prospects for jobs and growth and stability. And I know that Prime Minister Abe has taken some very bold steps to boost growth and jobs and demand in Japan.

But I know that Prime Minister Abe is also committed—as we are—to completing, this year, negotiations around the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which promises to open up markets and to create the kinds of high-standards trade agreements throughout the largest and most dynamic and fastest growing set of markets in the world.

During the meeting, we'll also have an opportunity to discuss a range of security issues, including our continued concerns about the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the importance of North Korea abiding by international law.

And I also look forward to having an extensive conversation about the situation in Syria and, I think, our joint recognition that the use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only a tragedy, but also a violation of international law that must be addressed.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:20 p.m. at the bilateral meetings pavilion of the Constantine Palace. Prime Minister Abe spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Xi Jinping of China in St. Petersburg
September 6, 2013

President Xi. Honorable President Obama, it's my great pleasure to meet you again. Our meeting today reminds me of the meeting we had this past June when we met in the Annenberg Estate. In that meeting, we reached important consensus of mutual interest in our bilateral relationship. In particular, we agreed once again to building a new model of major country relationship between China and the United States.

The Annenberg Estate is a beautiful and quiet place, and I still have fresh memories of your warm hospitality. So I take this opportunity to thank you again for hosting me.

Since we met last time, our two teams have worked closely together to implement a consensus we have reached. The fifth round of the China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue produced bountiful results. Our mil-to-mil relationship continues to improve. We have made solid progress in advancing practical cooperation in many different areas, and we have maintained close communication and coordination of major international and regional issues.

In my view, the China-U.S. relationship has maintained a sound momentum of development.

President Obama. Well, Mr. President, thank you for hosting us, and it is a pleasure to see you again.

As President Xi indicated, we had excellent meetings in Sunnylands earlier this year. And we've agreed to continue to build a new model of great power relations based on practical cooperation and constructively managing our differences.

As has been indicated, we've made significant progress on a range of issues, whether it's cooperation on addressing climate change, expanded military-to-military consultations that ensure awareness and avoid potential conflicts or miscommunications. And we've had some extensive discussions through the Strategic and Economic Dialogue about how we can continue to grow the economy and give some momentum to global growth that creates jobs, prosperity, and balanced growth around the world.

So this gives us an additional opportunity to discuss some of the topics at issue here at the G–20, as well as our mutual interest in addressing some significant global challenges, such as the challenge posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

And although there will continue to be some significant disagreements and sources of tension, I'm confident that they can be managed. And I want to reiterate that the United States welcomes the continuing peaceful rise of China and is interested in a China that is playing a stable and prosperous and responsible role, not only in the Asia-Pacific, but around the world.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:50 a.m. at Villa 10 on the Constantine Palace campus. President Xi spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President François Hollande of France in St. Petersburg
September 6, 2013

President Obama. It's always a pleasure to sit down with President Hollande. France is one of our oldest and closest allies as a critical voice in global affairs. So we very much appreciate President Hollande's leadership and France's partnership in some of the challenges that our countries in the world face together.

I thanked France and President Hollande for their outstanding efforts in Mali. We congratulate the Malian people on successful Presidential elections, and our countries will continue to work with the international community, including the United Nations, to help Mali to strengthen its democratic institutions and pursue reconciliation.

We had the opportunity to discuss how we and our P–5-plus-1 partners remain prepared to engage diplomatically with Iran to resolve the international community's concerns with Iran's nuclear program. We recognize there have been new elections in Iran. We hope that they take the opportunity to demonstrate—in actions and not just in words—that they, in fact, are committed to not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

With regard to Syria, obviously, a topic that President Hollande and I have had extensive discussions about, both our countries have concluded the same thing: that chemical weapons were used in Syria; that they were used by the Asad regime against civilians; that the chemical weapons ban is a critical international norm; and that it needs to be enforced.

I value very much President Hollande's commitment to a strong international response for these grievous acts. Any action that we contemplate, and partners like France might contemplate, would be limited, proportionate, and appropriate and would be focused on deterring the use of chemical weapons in the future and degrading the Asad regime's capacity to use chemical weapons.

We recognize that there is an underlying civil war that cannot be solved by military means alone, and so we continue to be committed to engaging in the Geneva II process to bring about a transition that could actually bring stability, prosperity, peace, and legitimacy to the situation in Syria.

We discussed our extensive engagement with our European and global counterparts, including here at the G–20. And it's clear that there are many countries in the world that agree with us that international norms must be upheld, and we're going to continue to consult closely with each other and with other leaders in the days to come.

So I—one last comment: We had a discussion about how the Syrian situation poses significant risks to Lebanon as well as Jordan, and we heard directly from Prime Minister Erdogan, the impact that it's having on Turkey. So even as we are looking at specific actions to enforce the international norm against using chemical weapons, we very much welcome and are participating with other countries in the humanitarian effort to ensure that we do not see a destabilizing situation that gets worse for neighboring countries in the region, as well as to provide just basic relief—food, care—health care, all the basics—for the Syrian population, millions of whom have been displaced by this terrible civil war.

So again, I want to thank very much François for his outstanding leadership and partnership in managing a whole range of very difficult situations around the world, but ones that ultimately, when like-minded countries get together, potentially can have a positive impact on.

[*At this point, President Hollande made remarks in French, which were translated by an interpreter, but no transcript was provided.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. at the bilateral meetings pavilion of the Constantine Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

The President's News Conference in St. Petersburg
September 6, 2013

The President. Good evening. Let me begin by thanking President Putin and the people of St. Petersburg and the people of Russia for hosting this G–20. This city has a long and storied history, including its historic resistance and extraordinary sacrifices during the Second World War. So I want to take this opportunity to salute the people of St. Petersburg and express our gratitude for their outstanding hospitality.

Now, this summit marks another milestone in the world's recovery from the financial crisis that erupted 5 years ago this month. Instead of the looming threat of another financial meltdown, we're focused for the first time in many years on building upon the gains that we've

made. For the first time in 3 years, instead of an urgent discussion to address the European financial crisis, we see a Europe that has emerged from recession.

Moreover, the United States is a source of strength in the global economy. Our manufacturing sector is rebounding. New rules have strengthened our banks and reduced the chance of another crisis. We're reducing our addiction to foreign oil and producing more clean energy. And as we learned today, over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created 7½ million new jobs, a pace of more than 2 million jobs each year. We've put more people back to work, but we've also cleared away the rubble of crisis and laid the foundation for stronger and more durable economic growth.

We're also making progress in putting our fiscal house in order. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years. And as Congress takes up important decisions in the coming month, I'm going to keep making the case for the smart investments and fiscal responsibility that keeps our economy growing, creates jobs, and keeps the U.S. competitive. That includes making sure we don't risk a U.S. default over paying bills we've already racked up. I'm determined that the world has confidence in the full faith and credit of the United States.

Now, as the world's largest economy, our recovery is helping to drive global growth. And in the emerging markets in particular, there's a recognition that a strong U.S. economy is good for their economies too.

Yet we came to St. Petersburg mindful of the challenges that remain. As it emerges from recession, Europe has an opportunity to focus on boosting demand and reducing unemployment, as well as making some of the structural changes that can increase long-term growth. Growth in emerging economies has slowed, so we need to make sure that we are working with them in managing this process. And I'm pleased that over the past 2 days, we reached a consensus on how to proceed.

We agreed that our focus needs to be on creating jobs and growth that put people back to work. We agreed on ways to encourage the investments in infrastructure that keep economies competitive. Nations agreed to continue pursuing financial reforms and to address tax evasion and tax avoidance, which undermines budgets and unfairly shifts the tax burden to other taxpayers.

We're moving ahead with our development agenda, with a focus on issues like food security and combating corruption. And I'm very pleased that the G–20 nations agreed to make faster progress on phasing down certain greenhouse gases a priority. That's an important step in our fight against climate change.

During my trip, we also continued our efforts to advance two key trade initiatives: the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. And I believe that if we continue to move forward on all the fronts that I've described, we can keep the global economy growing and keep creating jobs for our people.

Of course, even as we've focused on our shared prosperity—and although the primary task of the G–20 is to focus on our joint efforts to boost the global economy—we did also discuss a grave threat to our shared security, and that's the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons. And what I've been emphasizing and will continue to stress is that the Asad regime's brazen use of chemical weapons isn't just a Syrian tragedy; It's a threat to global peace and security.

Syria's escalating use of chemical weapons threatens its neighbors: Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel. It threatens to further destabilize the Middle East. It increases the risk that these weapons will fall into the hands of terrorist groups. But more broadly, it threatens to unravel the international norm against chemical weapons embraced by 189 nations, and those nations represent 98 percent of the world's people.

Failing to respond to this breach of this international norm would send a signal to rogue nations, authoritarian regimes, and terrorist organizations that they can develop and use weapons of mass destruction and not pay a consequence. And that's not the world that we want to live in.

This is why nations around the world have condemned Syria for this attack and called for action. I've been encouraged by discussions with my fellow leaders this week; there is a growing recognition that the world cannot stand idly by. Here in St. Petersburg, leaders from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East have come together to say that the international norm against the use of chemical weapons must be upheld and that the Asad regime used these weapons on its own people and that, as a consequence, there needs to be a strong response.

The Arab League Foreign Ministers have said the Asad regime is responsible and called for "deterrent and necessary measures against the culprits of this crime." The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, its General Secretariat has called the attack a "blatant affront to all religious and moral values and a deliberate disregard of international laws and norms, which requires a decisive action."

So, in the coming days, I'll continue to consult with my fellow leaders around the world, and I will continue to consult with Congress. And I will make the best case that I can to the American people, as well as to the international community, for taking necessary and appropriate action. And I intend to address the American people from the White House on Tuesday.

The kind of world we live in and our ability to deter this kind of outrageous behavior is going to depend on the decisions that we make in the days ahead. And I'm confident that if we deliberate carefully and we choose wisely and embrace our responsibilities, we can meet the challenges of this moment as well as those in the days ahead.

So with that, let me take some questions. I've got my handy list. And I will start with Julie Pace from AP.

Syria/President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the number of countries that have condemned the use of chemical weapons——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——but your advisers also say you're leaving this summit with a strong number of countries backing your call for military action. President Putin, just a short time ago, indicated it may only be a handful of countries, including France, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Can you tell us publicly what countries are backing your call for military action? And did you change any minds here? President Putin also mentioned your meeting with him earlier today. Can you tell us how that came about, and did you discuss both Syria and Edward Snowden? Thank you.

The President. I believe that there will be a statement issued later this evening—although, hopefully, in time for you guys to file back home—that indicates some of the additional countries that are making public statements.

Last night we had a good discussion. And I want to give President Putin credit that he facilitated, I think, a full airing of views on the issue. And here's how I would describe it, without giving the details or betraying the confidence of those who were speaking within the confines of the dinner. It was unanimous that chemical weapons were used—a unanimous conclusion that chemical weapons were used in Syria. There was a unanimous view that the norm against using chemical weapons has to be maintained, that these weapons were banned for a reason, and that the international community has to take those norms seriously.

I would say that the majority of the room is comfortable with our conclusion that Asad—the Asad Government—was responsible for their use. Obviously, this is disputed by President Putin. But if you polled the leaders last night, I am confident that you'd get a majority who said it is most likely—we are pretty confident—that the Asad regime used them.

Where there is a division has to do with the United Nations. There are a number of countries that, just as a matter of principle, believe that if military action is to be taken it needs to go through the U.N. Security Council. There are others—and I put myself in this camp, as somebody who's a strong supporter of the United Nations, who very much appreciates

the courage of the investigators who had gone in and looks forward to seeing the U.N. report, because I think we should try to get more information, not less in this situation—it is my view and a view that was shared by a number of people in the room that given Security Council paralysis on this issue, if we are serious about upholding a ban on chemical weapons use, then an international response is required, and that will not come through Security Council action.

And that's where, I think, the division comes from. And I respect those who are concerned about setting precedents of action outside of a U.N. Security Council resolution. I would greatly prefer working through multilateral channels and through the United Nations to get this done. But ultimately, what I believe in even more deeply, because I think that the security of the world and—my particular task, looking out for the national security of the United States—requires that when there's a breach this brazen of a norm this important, and the international community is paralyzed and frozen and doesn't act, then that norm begins to unravel.

And if that norm unravels, then other norms and prohibitions start unraveling. And that makes for a more dangerous world. And that then requires even more difficult choices and more difficult responses in the future.

Over 4—1,400 people were gassed. Over 400 of them were children. This is not something we've fabricated. This is not something that we are looking—are using as an excuse for military action. As I said last night, I was elected to end wars, not start them. I've spent the last 4½ years doing everything I can to reduce our reliance on military power as a means of meeting our international obligations and protecting the American people. But what I also know is, is that there are times where we have to make hard choices if we're going to stand up for the things that we care about. And I believe that this is one of those times.

And if we end up using the U.N. Security Council not as a means of enforcing international norms and international law, but rather as a barrier to acting on behalf of international norms and international law, then I think people, rightly, are going to be pretty skeptical about the system and whether it can work to protect those children that we saw in those videos.

And sometimes, the further we get from the horrors of that, the easier it is to rationalize not making tough choices. And I understand that. This is not convenient. This is not something that I think a lot of folks around the world find an appetizing set of choices. But the question is, do these norms mean something? And if we're not acting, what does that say?

If we're just issuing another statement of condemnation, if we're passing resolutions saying, wasn't that terrible? If people who decry international inaction in Rwanda and say how terrible it is that there are these human rights violations that take place around the world and why aren't we doing something about it—and they always look to the United States. Why isn't the United States doing something about this, the most powerful nation on Earth? Why are you allowing these terrible things to happen? And then, if the international community turns around when we're saying it's time to take some responsibility and says, "Well, hold on a second, we're not sure," that erodes our ability to maintain the kind of norms that we're looking at.

Now, I know that was a lengthy answer and you had a second part to your question.

The conversation I had with President Putin was on the margins of the plenary session, and it was a candid and constructive conversation, which characterizes my relationship with him. I know, as I've said before, everybody is always trying to look for body language and all that. But the truth of the matter is, is that my interactions with him tend to be very straightforward. We discussed Syria, and that was primarily the topic of conversation. Mr. Snowden did not come up beyond me saying that—reemphasizing that where we have common interests, I think it's important for the two of us to work together.

And on Syria, I said, listen, I don't expect us to agree on this issue of chemical weapons use, although it is possible that after the U.N.

inspectors' report, it may be more difficult for Mr. Putin to maintain his current position about the evidence. But what I did say is that we both agree that the underlying conflict can only be resolved through a political transition as envisioned by the Geneva I and Geneva II process. And so we need to move forward together. Even if you—the U.S. and Russia and other countries disagree on this specific issue of how to respond to chemical weapons use, it remains important for us to work together to try to urge all parties in the conflict to try to resolve it.

Because we've got 4 million people internally displaced. We've got millions of people in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon who are desperate, and the situation is only getting worse. And that's not in anybody's interests. It's not in America's interest. It's not in Russia's interest. It's not in the interest of the people in the region, and obviously, it's not in the interest of Syrians who've seen their lives completely disrupted and their country shattered.

So that is going to continue to be a project of ours. And that does speak to an issue that has been raised back home around this whole issue. You've heard some people say, well, we think if you're going to do something, you got to do something big, and maybe this isn't big enough or maybe it's too late, or other responses like that. And what I've tried to explain is, we may not solve the whole problem, but this particular problem of using chemical weapons on children, this one we might have an impact on, and that's worth acting on. That's important to us.

And what I've also said is, is that as far as the underlying conflict is concerned, unless the international community is willing to put massive numbers of troops on the ground—and I know nobody is signing up for that—we're not going to get a long-term military solution for the country. And we're—and that is something that can only come about, I think, if, as different as our perspectives may be, myself, Mr. Putin, and others are willing to set aside those differences and put some pressure on the parties on the ground. Okay?

Brianna [Brianna Keilar, CNN].

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. On the resolution to authorize the use of force, one of the big challenges right now isn't just Republicans, but it's from some of your loyal Democrats. It seems that the more they hear from classified briefings that the less likely they are to support you. If the full Congress doesn't pass this, will you go ahead with the strike? And also, Senator Susan Collins—one of the few Republicans who breaks through her party to give you support at times—she says: "What if we execute the strike, and then Asad decides to use chemical weapons again? Do we strike again?" And many Democrats are asking that as well. How do you answer her question?

The President. Well, first of all, in terms of the votes and the process in Congress, I knew this was going to be a heavy lift. I said that on Saturday when I said we're going to take it to Congress. Our polling operations are pretty good. I tend to have a pretty good sense of what current popular opinion is. And for the American people, who have been through over a decade of war now, with enormous sacrifice in blood and treasure, any hint of further military entanglements in the Middle East are going to be viewed with suspicion. And that suspicion will probably be even stronger in my party than in the Republican Party, since a lot of the people who supported me remember that I opposed the war in Iraq.

And what's also true is, is that that experience with the war in Iraq colors how people view this situation, not just back home in America, but also here in Europe and around the world. That's the prism through a lot of people—through which a lot of people are analyzing the situation.

So I understand the skepticism. I think it is very important, therefore, for us to work through systematically making the case to every Senator and every Member of Congress. And that's what we're doing.

I dispute a little bit, Brianna, the notion that people come out of classified briefings and they're less in favor of it. I think that when they

go through the classified briefings, they feel pretty confident that, in fact, chemical weapons were used and that the Asad regime used them.

The—where you will see resistance is people being worried about a slippery slope and how effective a limited action might be. And our response, based on my discussions with our military, is that we can have a response that is limited, that is proportional, that—when I say "limited," it's both in time and in scope—but that is meaningful and that degrades Asad's capacity to deliver chemical weapons not just this time, but also in the future, and serves as a strong deterrent.

Now, is it possible that Asad doubles down in the face of our action and uses chemical weapons more widely? I suppose anything is possible, but it wouldn't be wise. I think at that point, mobilizing the international community would be easier, not harder. I think it would be pretty hard for the U.N. Security Council at that point to continue to resist the requirement for action, and we would gladly join with an international coalition to make sure that it stops.

So the—one of the biggest concerns of the American people—certain Members of Congress may have different concerns; there may be certain Members of Congress who say we've got to do even more or claim to have previously criticized me for not hitting Asad and now are saying they're going to vote no, and you'll have to ask them exactly how they square that circle. But for the American people at least, the concern really has to do with understanding that what we're describing here would be limited and proportionate and designed to address this problem of chemical weapons use and upholding a norm that helps keep all of us safe.

And that is going to be the case that I try to make not just to Congress, but to the American people over the coming days. Okay?

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Just a follow-up: Must you have full Congressional approval? What if the Senate votes yes and the House does not, for instance? Would you go ahead with the strike?

The President. Brianna, I think it would be a mistake for me to jump the gun and speculate, because right now I'm working to get as much support as possible out of Congress. But I'll repeat something that I said in Sweden when I was asked a similar question. I did not put this before Congress just as a political ploy or as symbolism. I put it before Congress because I could not honestly claim that the threat posed by Asad's use of chemical weapons on innocent civilians and women and children posed a imminent, direct threat to the United States. In that situation, obviously, I don't worry about Congress. We do what we have to do to keep the American people safe. I could not say that it was immediately, directly going to have an impact on our allies. Again, in those situations, I would act right away. This wasn't even a situation like Libya, where you've got troops rolling towards Benghazi and you have a concern about time in terms of saving somebody right away.

This was an event that happened. My military assured me that we could act today, tomorrow, a month from now; that we could do so proportionately, but meaningfully. And in that situation, I think it is important for us to have a serious debate in the United States about these issues.

Because these are going to be the kinds of national security threats that are most likely to recur over the next 5, 10 years. They're very few countries who are going to go at us directly. I mean, we have to be vigilant, but our military is unmatched. Those countries that are large and powerful like Russia or China, we have the kind of relationship with them where we're not getting in conflicts of that sort. At least over the last several decades, there's been a recognition that neither country benefits from that kind of great power conflict.

So the kinds of national security threats that we're going to confront, they're terrorist threats; they're failed states; they are the proliferation of deadly weapons. And in those circumstances, a President is going to have to make a series of decisions about which one of

these threats over the long term starts making us less and less safe. And where we can work internationally, we should.

There are going to be times, though, where—as is true here—the international community is stuck for a whole variety of political reasons. And if that's the case, people are going to look to the United States and say, what are you going to do about it?

And that's not a responsibility that we always enjoy. There was a leader of a smaller country who I've spoken to over the last several days who said: "You know, I don't envy you, because I'm a small country and nobody expects me to do anything about chemical weapons around the world. They know I have no capacity to do something."

And it's tough because people do look to the United States. And the question for the American people is, is that responsibility that we'll be willing to bear? And I believe that when you have a limited, proportional strike like this—not Iraq, not putting boots on the ground; not some long, drawn-out affair; not without any risks, but with manageable risks—that we should be willing to bear that responsibility.

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning—or good evening. I think it's still "good morning" for—back home.

The President. By tonight it will be tonight——

Q. Fair enough.

The President. ——when we get back home. [*Laughter*] Yes.

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. I think we're all relieved. I want to follow up on Brianna's question, because it seems these Members of Congress are simply responding to their constituents——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——and you're seeing a lot these town halls, and it seems as if the more you press your case, the more John Kerry presses the case on your behalf, the more the opposition grows. And maybe it's just—or the more the opposition becomes vocal. Why do you think you've struggled with that? And you keep talking about a limited mission. We have a report that indicates you've actually asked for an expanded list of targets in Syria, and one military official told NBC News, he characterized it as "mission creep." Can you respond to that report?

The President. That report is inaccurate. I'm not going to comment on operational issues that are sourced by some military official. One thing I've got a pretty clear idea about is what I talked with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about, and what we have consistently talked about is something limited and proportional that would degrade Mr. Asad's capabilities.

In terms of opposition, Chuck, I expected this. This is hard, and I was under no illusions when I embarked on this path. But I think it's the right thing to do. I think it's good for our democracy. We will be more effective if we are unified going forward.

And part of what we knew would be—that there would be some politics and interjecting themselves——

Q. You believe it's all politics?

The President. No, I said "some." But what I have also said is, is that the American people have gone through a lot when it comes to the military over the last decade or so. And so I understand that. And when you starting talking about chemical weapons and their proliferation, those images of those bodies can sometimes be forgotten pretty quickly. The news cycle moves on.

Frankly, if we weren't talking about the need for an international response right now, this wouldn't be what everybody would be asking about. There would be some resolutions that were being proffered in the United Nations and the usual hocus-pocus, but the world and the country would have moved on.

So trying to impart a sense of urgency about this—why we can't have an environment in which, over time, people start thinking, we can get away with chemical weapons use—it's a hard sell, but it's something I believe in. And as I explained to Brianna, in this context, me making sure that the American people under-

stand it, I think, is important before I take action.

Jon Karl [ABC News].

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One of your closest allies in the House said yesterday, "When you've got 97 percent of your constituents saying no, it's kind of hard to say yes." Why should Members of Congress go against the will of their constituents and to support your decision on this? And I still haven't heard a direct response to Brianna's question: If Congress fails to authorize this, will you go forward with an attack on Syria?

The President. Right, and you're not getting a direct response. [*Laughter*] Brianna asked the question very well. I mean, did you think that——

Q. Well, it's a pretty basic question.

The President. ——I was going to give you a different answer? No. [*Laughter*] What I have said, and I will repeat, is that I put this before Congress for a reason. I think we will be more effective and stronger if, in fact, Congress authorizes this action. I'm not going to engage in parlor games now, Jonathan, about whether or not it's going to pass when I'm talking substantively to Congress about why this is important and talking to the American people about why this is important.

Now, with respect to Congress and how they should respond to constituency concerns, I do consider it part of my job to help make the case and to explain to the American people exactly why I think this is the right thing to do. And it's conceivable that at the end of the day, I don't persuade a majority of the American people that it's the right thing to do. And then, each Member of Congress is going to have to decide, if I think it's the right thing to do for America's national security and the world's national security, then how do I vote? And you know what? That's what you're supposed to do as a Member of Congress. Ultimately, you listen to your constituents, but you've also got to make some decisions about what you believe is right for America.

And that's the same for me as President of the United States. There are a whole bunch of decisions that I make that are unpopular, as you well know. But I do so because I think they're the right thing to do. And I trust my constituents want me to offer my best judgment. That's why they elected me. That's why they reelected me even after there were some decisions I made that they disagreed with. And I would hope that Members of Congress would end up feeling the same way.

The last point I would make: These kinds of interventions, these kinds of actions are always unpopular because they seem distant and removed. And I want to make sure I'm being clear. I'm not drawing a analogy to World War II other than to say when London was getting bombed it was profoundly unpopular both in Congress and around the country to help the British. It doesn't mean it wasn't the right thing to do. It just means people are struggling with jobs and bills to pay and they don't want their sons or daughters put in harm's way and these entanglements far away are dangerous and different.

I—to bring the analogy closer to home, the intervention in Kosovo, very unpopular. But ultimately, I think it was the right thing to do. And the international community should be glad that it came together to do it.

When people say that it is a terrible stain on all of us that hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered in Rwanda, well, imagine if Rwanda was going on right now, and we asked, should we intervene in Rwanda? I think it's fair to say that it probably wouldn't poll real well.

So, typically, when any kind of military action is popular, it's because either there's been a very clear, direct threat to us—9/11—or an administration uses various hooks to suggest that American interests were directly threatened, like in Panama or Grenada. And sometimes, those hooks are more persuasive than others, but typically, they're not put before Congress. And again, we just went through something pretty tough with respect to Iraq. So all that, I guess, provides some context for why you might expect people to be resistant to it.

Q. But your Deputy National Security Adviser said that it is not your intention to attack if Congress doesn't approve it. Is he right?

The President. I don't think that's exactly what he said. But I think I've answered the question.

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Syria/Chemical Weapons

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Those of us who remember covering your campaign remember you saying that militarily, when the United States acts, it's not just important what it does, but how it goes about doing it; and that even when America sets its course, it's important to engage the international community and listen to different ideas even as it's pursuing that action. I wonder if you leave here and return to Washington, seeing the skepticism there, hearing it here, with any different ideas that might delay military action. For example, some in Congress have suggested giving the Syrian regime 45 days to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention, get rid of its chemical stockpiles, do something that would enhance international sense of accountability for Syria, but delay military action. Are you, Mr. President, looking at any of these ideas? Or are we on a fast track to military action as soon as Congress renders its judgment one way or the other?

The President. I am listening to all these ideas. And some of them are constructive. And I'm listening to ideas in Congress, and I'm listening to ideas here. Look, I want to repeat here: My goal is to maintain the international norm on banning chemical weapons. I want that enforcement to be real. I want it to be serious. I want people to understand that gassing innocent people, delivering chemical weapons against children is not something we do. It's prohibited in active wars between countries. We certainly don't do it against kids. And we've got to stand up for that principle.

If there are tools that we can use to ensure that, obviously my preference would be, again, to act internationally in a serious way and to make sure that Mr. Asad gets the message.

I'm not itching for military action. Recall, Major, that I have been criticized for the last couple of years by some of the folks who are now saying they would oppose these strikes for not striking. And I think that I have a well-deserved reputation for taking very seriously and soberly the idea of military engagement.

So we will look at these ideas. So far, at least, I have not seen ideas presented that, as a practical matter, I think would do the job. But this is a situation where part of the reason I wanted to foster debate was to make sure that everybody thought about both the ramifications of action and inaction.

Q. So currently, the only way to enforce this international norm is militarily and even giving us—the Asad regime extra time would not achieve your goals?

The President. What I'm saying, Major, is that so far, what we've seen is a escalation by the Asad regime of chemical weapons use.

You'll recall that several months ago, I said we now say with some confidence that at a small level Asad has used chemical weapons. We not only sent warnings to Asad, but we demarched, meaning we sent a strong message through countries that have relationships with Asad, that he should not be doing this. And rather than hold the line, we ended up with what we saw on August 21. So this is not as if we haven't tested the proposition that the guy—or at least generals under his charge—can show restraint when it comes to this stuff. And they've got one of the largest stockpiles in the world.

But I want to emphasize that we continue to consult with our international partners. I'm listening to Congress. I'm not just doing the talking. And if there are good ideas that are worth pursuing then I'm going to be open to it.

I will take last question. Tangi, AFP [Tangi Quemener, Agence France-Presse].

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil/President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Yesterday night you had two unscheduled bilateral meetings with your Brazilian and Mexican counter-

parts after they voiced very strong concerns about being allegedly targeted by the NSA. What was your message to them? And do these revelations—that constant stream of revelations since the start of this summer—make it harder for you to build confidence with your partners in international forums such as this one?

The President. Good. The—I did meet with President Rousseff as well as President Peña Nieto, of Brazil and Mexico, respectively, to discuss these allegations that were made in the press about the NSA. I won't share with you all the details of the conversation, but what I said to them is consistent with what I've said publicly. The United States has an intelligence agency, and our intelligence agency's job is to gather information that's not available through public sources. If they were available through public sources, then they wouldn't be an intelligence agency. In that sense, what we do is similar to what countries around the world do with their intelligence services.

But what is true is that we are bigger; we have greater capabilities. The difference between our capabilities and other countries probably tracks the differences in military capabilities between countries. And what I've said is that because technology is changing so rapidly, because these capabilities are growing, it is important for us to step back and review what it is that we're doing, because just because we can get information doesn't necessarily always mean that we should.

There may be costs and benefits to doing certain things, and we've got to weigh those. And I think that, traditionally, what's happened over decades is the general assumption was, well, you just—whatever you can get, you just kind of pull in, and then you kind of sift through later and try to figure out what's useful. The nature of technology and the legitimate concerns around privacy and civil liberties means that it's important for us on the front end to say, all right, are we actually going to get useful information here? And if not—or how useful is it? If it's not that important, should we be more constrained in how we use certain technical capabilities?

Now, just more specifically then, on Brazil and Mexico, I said that I would look into the allegations. I mean, part of the problem here is, we get these through the press, and then I've got to go back and find out what's going on with respect to these particular allegations. I don't subscribe to all these newspapers, and—although I think the NSA does, now at least. [*Laughter*]

And then, what I assured President Rousseff and President Peña Nieto is, is that they should take—that I take these allegations very seriously; I understand their concerns; I understand the concerns of the Mexican and Brazilian people—and that we will work with their teams to resolve what is a source of tension.

Now, the last thing I'd say about this, though, is just because there are tensions doesn't mean that it overrides all the incredibly wide-ranging interests that we share with so many of these countries. And there's a reason why I went to Brazil. There's a reason why I invited President Rousseff to come to the United States. Brazil is an incredibly important country. It is a amazing success story in terms of a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. It is one of the most dynamic economies in the world. And obviously, for the two largest nations in the hemisphere to have a strong relationship, that can only be good for the people of our two countries, as well as the region. Same is true with Mexico, one of our closest friends, allies, and neighbors.

And so we will work through this particular issue. It does not detract from the larger concerns that we have and the opportunities that we both want to take advantage of.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you, St. Petersburg.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:55 p.m. in the press center of the Constantine Palace. In his remarks, he referred to former National Security Agency contractor Edward J. Snowden, who is accused of leaking classified documents to members of the news media. A reporter referred to Rep. Elijah E. Cummings.

Joint Statement by the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom
September 6, 2013

The Leaders and Representatives of Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America made the following statement on the margins of the Group of 20 Nations Leader's Meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia:

The international norm against the use of chemical weapons is longstanding and universal. The use of chemical weapons anywhere diminishes the security of people everywhere. Left unchallenged, it increases the risk of further use and proliferation of these weapons.

We condemn in the strongest terms the horrific chemical weapons attack in the suburbs of Damascus on August 21st that claimed the lives of so many men, women, and children. The evidence clearly points to the Syrian government being responsible for the attack, which is part of a pattern of chemical weapons use by the regime.

We call for a strong international response to this grave violation of the world's rules and conscience that will send a clear message that this kind of atrocity can never be repeated. Those who perpetrated these crimes must be held accountable.

Signatories have consistently supported a strong UN Security Council Resolution, given the Security Council's responsibilities to lead the international response, but recognize that the Council remains paralyzed as it has been for two and a half years. The world cannot wait for endless failed processes that can only lead to increased suffering in Syria and regional instability. We support efforts undertaken by the United States and other countries to reinforce the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

We commit to supporting longer term international efforts, including through the United Nations, to address the enduring security challenge posed by Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Signatories have also called for the UN fact finding mission to present its results as soon as possible, and for the Security Council to act accordingly.

We condemn in the strongest terms all human rights violations in Syria on all sides. More than 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict, more than 2 million people have become refugees, and approximately 5 million are internally displaced. Recognizing that Syria's conflict has no military solution, we reaffirm our commitment to seek a peaceful political settlement through full implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communique. We are committed to a political solution which will result in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria.

We have contributed generously to the latest United Nations (UN) and ICRC appeals for humanitarian assistance and will continue to provide support to address the growing humanitarian needs in Syria and their impact on regional countries. We welcome the contributions announced at the meeting of donor countries on the margins of the G20. We call upon all parties to allow humanitarian actors safe and unhindered access to those in need.

European signatories will continue to engage in promoting a common European position.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks During a Roundtable Discussion With Civil Society Leaders in St. Petersburg, Russia
September 6, 2013

Well, I just want to say thank you to all the participants in this roundtable. This is a incredible and very diverse group of civil society leaders. And this is something that I really enjoy

doing at every country that I visit because it is my firm belief that a country's strength ultimately comes from its people, and that as important as government is—and laws—what makes a country democratic and effective in delivering prosperity and security and hope to people is when they've got an active, thriving civil society.

And all of these leaders, ranging from business leaders to youth leaders to environmental leaders, those who are advocating on behalf of a free press or the rule of law, all of them contribute in one way or another to continuing to strengthen Russian society and helping to make progress on behalf of all people.

And the same is true in the United States. I'm now in government, but I got my start as a community organizer, somebody who was working in what would be called an NGO in the international community. And the work I was doing was helping poor communities have a voice in what was happening in their lives. And I got elected as President by engaging people at a grassroots level.

So the kinds of activities that are represented here are critically important to Russia's development, and I'm very proud of their work. And I think it is important for us to remember that in every country—here in Russia, in the United States, around the globe—that part of good government is making sure that we're creating a space for civil society to function effectively: freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, making sure that people can join together and make common cause around the issues that they care deeply about.

So I appreciate taking the time. I'm not going to do all the talking here. I want to spend most of my time listening. But I want to thank you again and hope all of you continue the good work. Good.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza St. Petersburg Airport hotel.

The President's Weekly Address
September 7, 2013

Almost 3 weeks ago in Syria, more than a thousand innocent people, including hundreds of children, were murdered in the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century. And the United States has presented a powerful case to the world that the Syrian Government was responsible for this horrific attack on its own people.

This was not only a direct attack on human dignity, it's a serious threat to our national security. There's a reason governments representing 98 percent of the world's people have agreed to ban the use of chemical weapons: not only because they cause death and destruction in the most indiscriminate and inhumane way possible, but because they can also fall into the hands of terrorist groups who wish to do us harm.

That's why, last weekend, I announced that, as Commander in Chief, I decided that the United States should take military action against the Syrian regime. This is not a decision I made lightly. Deciding to use military force is the most solemn decision we can make as a nation.

As the leader of the world's oldest constitutional democracy, I also know that our country will be stronger if we act together, and our actions will be more effective. That's why I asked Members of Congress to debate this issue and vote on authorizing the use of force.

What we're not talking about is an open-ended intervention. This would not be another Iraq or Afghanistan. There would be no American boots on the ground. Any action we take would be limited, both in time and scope, designed to deter the Syrian Government from gassing its own people again and degrade its ability to do so.

I know that the American people are weary after a decade of war, even as the war in Iraq has ended and the war in Afghanistan is winding down. That's why we're not putting our troops in the middle of somebody else's war.

But we are the United States of America. We cannot turn a blind eye to images like the ones we've seen out of Syria. Failing to respond to this outrageous attack would increase the risk that chemical weapons could be used again, that they would fall into the hands of terrorists who might use them against us, and it would send a horrible signal to other nations that there would be no consequences for their use of these weapons, all of which would pose a serious threat to our national security.

That's why we can't ignore chemical weapons attacks like this one, even if they happen halfway around the world. And that's why I call on Members of Congress from both parties to come together and stand up for the kind of world we want to live in, the kind of world we want to leave our children and future generations.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on September 3 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on September 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 7.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Certain Terrorist Attacks
September 10, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. Consistent with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency declared in Proclamation 7463 with respect to the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, is to continue in effect for an additional year.

The terrorist threat that led to the declaration on September 14, 2001, of a national emergency continues. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect after September 14, 2013, the national emergency with respect to the terrorist threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 10, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Address to the Nation on the Situation in Syria
September 10, 2013

My fellow Americans, tonight I want to talk to you about Syria: why it matters and where we go from here.

Over the past 2 years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Asad has turned into a brutal civil war. Over 100,000 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country. In that time, America has worked with allies to provide humanitarian support, to help the moderate opposition, and to shape a political settlement. But I have resisted calls for military action because we cannot resolve someone else's civil war through force, particularly after a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The situation profoundly changed, though, on August 21, when Asad's Government gassed to death over a thousand people, including

hundreds of children. The images from this massacre are sickening: men, women, children lying in rows, killed by poison gas; others foaming at the mouth, gasping for breath; a father clutching his dead children, imploring them to get up and walk. On that terrible night, the world saw in gruesome detail the terrible nature of chemical weapons and why the overwhelming majority of humanity has declared them off limits: a crime against humanity and a violation of the laws of war.

This was not always the case. In World War I, American GIs were among the many thousands killed by deadly gas in the trenches of Europe. In World War II, the Nazis used gas to inflict the horror of the Holocaust. Because these weapons can kill on a mass scale, with no distinction between soldier and infant, the civilized world has spent a century working to ban them. And in 1997, the United States Senate overwhelmingly approved an international agreement prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, now joined by 189 Governments that represent 98 percent of humanity.

On August 21, these basic rules were violated, along with our sense of common humanity. No one disputes that chemical weapons were used in Syria. The world saw thousands of videos, cell phone pictures, and social media accounts from the attack, and humanitarian organizations told stories of hospitals packed with people who had symptoms of poison gas.

Moreover, we know the Asad regime was responsible. In the days leading up to August 21, we know that Asad's chemical weapons personnel prepared for an attack near an area where they mix sarin gas. They distributed gasmasks to their troops. Then they fired rockets from a regime-controlled area into 11 neighborhoods that the regime has been trying to wipe clear of opposition forces. Shortly after those rockets landed, the gas spread, and hospitals filled with the dying and the wounded. We know senior figures in Asad's military machine reviewed the results of the attack, and the regime increased their shelling of the same neighborhoods in the days that followed. We've also studied samples of blood and hair from people at the site that tested positive for sarin.

When dictators commit atrocities, they depend upon the world to look the other way until those horrifying pictures fade from memory. But these things happened. The facts cannot be denied. The question now is what the United States of America—and the international community—is prepared to do about it. Because what happened to those people—to those children—is not only a violation of international law, it's also a danger to our security.

Let me explain why. If we fail to act, the Asad regime will see no reason to stop using chemical weapons. As the ban against these weapons erodes, other tyrants will have no reason to think twice about acquiring poison gas and using them. Over time, our troops would again face the prospect of chemical warfare on the battlefield. And it could be easier for terrorist organizations to obtain these weapons and to use them to attack civilians.

If fighting spills beyond Syria's borders, these weapons could threaten allies like Turkey, Jordan, and Israel. And a failure to stand against the use of chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction and embolden Asad's ally Iran, which must decide whether to ignore international law by building a nuclear weapon or to take a more peaceful path.

This is not a world we should accept. This is what's at stake. And that is why, after careful deliberation, I determined that it is in the national security interests of the United States to respond to the Asad regime's use of chemical weapons through a targeted military strike. The purpose of this strike would be to deter Asad from using chemical weapons, to degrade his regime's ability to use them, and to make clear to the world that we will not tolerate their use.

That's my judgment as Commander in Chief. But I'm also the President of the world's oldest constitutional democracy. So even though I possess the authority to order military strikes, I believed it was right, in the absence of a direct or imminent threat to our security, to take this debate to Congress. I believe our democracy is stronger when the President acts with the support of Congress. And I believe

that America acts more effectively abroad when we stand together.

This is especially true after a decade that put more and more war-making power in the hands of the President and more and more burdens on the shoulders of our troops, while sidelining the people's representatives from the critical decisions about when we use force.

Now, I know that after the terrible toll of Iraq and Afghanistan, the idea of any military action, no matter how limited, is not going to be popular. After all, I've spent 4½ years working to end wars, not to start them. Our troops are out of Iraq. Our troops are coming home from Afghanistan. And I know Americans want all of us in Washington—especially me—to concentrate on the task of building our Nation here at home: putting people back to work, educating our kids, growing our middle class.

It's no wonder, then, that you're asking hard questions. So let me answer some of the most important questions that I've heard from Members of Congress and that I've read in letters that you've sent to me.

First, many of you have asked, won't this put us on a slippery slope to another war? One man wrote to me that we are "still recovering from our involvement in Iraq." A veteran put it more bluntly: "This nation is sick and tired of war." My answer is simple: I will not put American boots on the ground in Syria. I will not pursue an open-ended action like Iraq or Afghanistan. I will not pursue a prolonged air campaign like Libya or Kosovo. This would be a targeted strike to achieve a clear objective: deterring the use of chemical weapons and degrading Asad's capabilities.

Others have asked whether it's worth acting if we don't take out Asad. As some Members of Congress have said, there's no point in simply doing a "pinprick" strike in Syria. Let me make something clear: The United States military doesn't do pinpricks. Even a limited strike will send a message to Asad that no other nation can deliver. I don't think we should remove another dictator with force; we learned from Iraq that doing so makes us responsible for all that comes next. But a targeted strike can make Asad—or any other dictator—think twice before using chemical weapons.

Other questions involve the dangers of retaliation. We don't dismiss any threats, but the Asad regime does not have the ability to seriously threaten our military. Any other retaliation they might seek is in line with threats that we face every day. Neither Asad nor his allies have any interest in escalation that would lead to his demise. And our ally Israel can defend itself with overwhelming force, as well as the unshakeable support of the United States of America.

Many of you have asked a broader question: Why should we get involved at all in a place that's so complicated and where, as one person wrote to me, "those who come after Asad may be enemies of human rights"? It's true that some of Asad's opponents are extremists. But Al Qaida will only draw strength in a more chaotic Syria if people there see the world doing nothing to prevent innocent civilians from being gassed to death. The majority of the Syrian people—and the Syrian opposition we work with—just want to live in peace, with dignity and freedom. And the day after any military action, we would redouble our efforts to achieve a political solution that strengthens those who reject the forces of tyranny and extremism.

Finally, many of you have asked: Why not leave this to other countries or seek solutions short of force? As several people wrote to me, "We should not be the world's policeman." I agree, and I have a deeply held preference for peaceful solutions. Over the last 2 years, my administration has tried diplomacy and sanctions, warnings and negotiations, but chemical weapons were still used by the Asad regime.

However, over the last few days, we've seen some encouraging signs. In part because of the credible threat of U.S. military action, as well as constructive talks that I had with President Putin, the Russian Government has indicated a willingness to join with the international community in pushing Asad to give up his chemical weapons. The Asad regime has now admitted that it has these weapons and even said they'd join the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits their use.

It's too early to tell whether this offer will succeed, and any agreement must verify that the Asad regime keeps its commitments. But this initiative has the potential to remove the threat of chemical weapons without the use of force, particularly because Russia is one of Asad's strongest allies.

I have therefore asked the leaders of Congress to postpone a vote to authorize the use of force while we pursue this diplomatic path. I'm sending Secretary of State John Kerry to meet his Russian counterpart on Thursday, and I will continue my own discussions with President Putin. I've spoken to the leaders of two of our closest allies, France and the United Kingdom, and we will work together in consultation with Russia and China to put forward a resolution at the U.N. Security Council requiring Asad to give up his chemical weapons and to ultimately destroy them under international control. We'll also give U.N. inspectors the opportunity to report their findings about what happened on August 21. And we will continue to rally support from allies from Europe to the Americas, from Asia to the Middle East, who agree on the need for action.

Meanwhile, I've ordered our military to maintain their current posture to keep the pressure on Asad and to be in a position to respond if diplomacy fails. And tonight I give thanks again to our military and their families for their incredible strength and sacrifices.

My fellow Americans, for nearly seven decades, the United States has been the anchor of global security. This has meant doing more than forging international agreements. It has meant enforcing them. The burdens of leadership are often heavy, but the world is a better place because we have borne them.

And so to my friends on the right, I ask you to reconcile your commitment to America's military might with a failure to act when a cause is so plainly just. To my friends on the left, I ask you to reconcile your belief in freedom and dignity for all people with those images of children writhing in pain and going still on a cold hospital floor. For sometimes, resolutions and statements of condemnation are simply not enough.

Indeed, I'd ask every Member of Congress—and those of you watching at home tonight—to view those videos of the attack and then ask: What kind of world will we live in if the United States of America sees a dictator brazenly violate international law with poison gas and we choose to look the other way?

Franklin Roosevelt once said, "Our national determination to keep free of foreign wars and foreign entanglements cannot prevent us from feeling deep concern when ideals and principles that we have cherished are challenged." Our ideals and principles, as well as our national security, are at stake in Syria, along with our leadership of a world where we seek to ensure that the worst weapons will never be used.

America is not the world's policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong. But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death—and thereby make our own children safer over the long run—I believe we should act. That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional. With humility, but with resolve, let us never lose sight of that essential truth.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov of Russia; President François Hollande of France; and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia
September 11, 2013

The President. Good morning.

Audience members. Good morning!

The President. From Scripture, we learn of the miracle of restoration: "You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again. From the depths of the Earth, you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again."

Secretary Hagel, General Dempsey, members of our Armed Forces, and most of all, the survivors who bear the wounds of that day and the families of those we lost, it is an honor to be with you here again to remember the tragedy of 12 Septembers ago, to honor the greatness of all who responded, and to stand with those who still grieve and to provide them some measure of comfort once more. Together, we pause, and we pray, and we give humble thanks—as families and as a nation—for the strength and the grace that, from the depths of our despair, has brought us up again, has revived us again, has given us strength to keep on.

We pray for the memory of all those taken from us, nearly 3,000 innocent souls. Our hearts still ache for the futures snatched away, the lives that might have been, the parents who would have known the joys of being grandparents, the fathers and mothers who would have known the pride of a child's graduation, the sons and daughters who would have grown, maybe married and been blessed with children of their own. Those beautiful boys and girls just beginning to find their way, who today would have been teenagers and young men and women looking ahead, imagining the mark they'd make on the world.

They left this Earth. They slipped from our grasp. But it was written, "What the heart has once owned and had, it shall never lose." What your families lost in the temporal, in the here and now, is now eternal: the pride that you carry in your hearts, the love that will never die, your loved ones' everlasting place in America's heart.

We pray for you, their families, who have known the awful depths of loss. And in the quiet moments we have spent together and from the stories that you've shared, I'm amazed at the will that you've summoned in your lives to lift yourselves up and to carry on and to live and love and laugh again.

Even more than memorials of stone and water, your lives are the greatest tribute to those that we lost. For their legacy shines on in you: when you smile just like him, when you toss your hair just like her, when you foster scholarships and service projects that bear the name and—of those we lost and make a better world. When you join the firehouse or you put on the uniform or you devote yourself to a cause greater than yourself, just like they did, that's a testimony to them. And in your resilience, you have taught us all, there is no trouble we cannot endure and there is no calamity we cannot overcome.

We pray for all those who have stepped forward in those years of war: diplomats who serve in dangerous posts, as we saw this day last year in Benghazi; intelligence professionals, often unseen and unheralded, who protect us in every way; our men and women in uniform who defend this country that we love.

Today we remember not only those who died that September day. We pay solemn tribute to more than 6,700 patriots who have given their full measure since: military and civilians. We see their legacy in the friendships they forged, the attacks they prevented, the innocent lives they saved, and in their comrades in Afghanistan who are completing the mission and who by the end of next year will have helped to end this war.

So this is the path that we've traveled together. These are the wounds that continue to heal. And this is the faith in God and each other that carries us through, that restores us, and that we summon once more each time we come to hallowed ground, beside this building or in a Pennsylvania field or where the towers

once stood. Here, in such moments of grace, we are renewed. And it is here that we reaffirm the values and virtues that must guide us.

Let us have the strength to face the threats that endure, different though they may be from 12 years ago, so that as long as there are those who would strike our citizens, we will stand vigilant and defend our Nation.

Let us have the wisdom to know that while force is at times necessary, force alone cannot build the world we seek. So we recommit to the partnerships and progress that builds mutual respect and deepens trust and allows more people to live in dignity, prosperity, and freedom.

Let us have the confidence in the values that make us Americans, which we must never lose: the shining liberties that make us a beacon of the world, the rich diversity that makes us stronger, the unity and commitment to one another that we sustain on this National Day of Service and Remembrance.

And above all, let us have the courage, like the survivors and families here today, to carry on, no matter how dark the night or how difficult the day. "You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again. And from the depths of the Earth, you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and you will comfort me again."

May God bless the memory of those that we lost. May He comfort you and your families, and may God bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:32 a.m.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting
September 12, 2013

Well, obviously, we're missing a few members of our Cabinet here today. In particular, John Kerry is overseas meeting on a topic that we've been spending a lot of time on over the last several weeks: the situation in Syria and how we can make sure that chemical weapons are not used against innocent people.

I am hopeful that the discussions that Senator—Secretary Kerry had with Foreign Minister Lavrov, as well as some of the other players in this, can yield a concrete result. And I know that he is going to be working very hard over the next several days to see what the possibilities are there.

But even as we have been spending a lot of time on the Syria issue and making sure that international attention is focused on the horrible tragedy that occurred there, it is still important to recognize that we've got a lot more stuff to do here in this Government.

The American people are still interested in making sure that our kids are getting the kind of education they deserve; that we're putting people back to work; that we are dealing properly with a Federal budget; that bills are getting paid on time; that the full faith and credit of the United States is preserved; and that the Federal Government itself is, in every single agency, running the way it should and making sure that our constituents and the American people are getting a good deal.

So we're going to spend some time here today talking about all the efforts that have been made by many of these Cabinet Secretaries to streamline operations, to cut out waste, to improve performance, to improve customer satisfaction. We're going to focus on some specific issues, including managing some of the budget debates that are going to be taking place over the next several weeks.

We're going to be talking about the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, where we've seen some tremendous progress over the last several months and are confident that starting at the beginning of next month, people are going to be able to start signing up for health care, in many cases, for the first time. And we're going to spend some time talking about issues like comprehensive immigration reform that are still of enormous importance to ensure that America grows.

So I appreciate all the great work that people have done. Some of the Cabinet members here are still relatively new, but thanks to their

confirmations and the great teams they put around them, I know that they're hitting the ground running. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov of Russia.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Principles for Modernizing the Military Compensation and Retirement Systems
September 12, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 674(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, Public Law 112–239, January 2, 2013, I hereby transmit principles for modernizing the military compensation and retirement systems requested by the Act.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 12, 2013.

Letter to the Chairman of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission Transmitting Principles for Modernizing the Military Compensation and Retirement Systems
September 12, 2013

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to section 674(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, Public Law 112–239, January 2, 2013, I hereby transmit to you and the other members of the Military Compensation and Retirement Commission, the principles for modernizing the military compensation and retirement systems requested by the Act.

I wish the Commission success in its important work.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The letter was sent to Alphonso Maldon, Jr., Chairman, Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait
September 13, 2013

President Obama. It's a great pleasure to welcome our friend, the Amir of Kuwait, to the Oval Office. Kuwait is one of our most important partners in the region, and we have a very strong bilateral defense agreement, as well as working together on a whole range of economic and social and security issues.

We had the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues. Obviously, at the top of the list was the situation in Syria. Our two countries are in agreement that the use of chemical weapons that we saw in Syria was a criminal act and that it is absolutely important for the international community to respond in not only deterring repeated use of chemical weapons, but hopefully, getting those chemical weapons outside of Syria.

I shared with the Amir my hope that the negotiations that are currently taking place be-

tween Secretary of State Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov in Geneva bear fruit. But I repeated what I've said publicly, which is that any agreement needs to be verifiable and enforceable. And we agreed that, ultimately, what's needed for the underlying conflict is a political settlement that allows ordinary Syrians to get back to their homes, to rebuild, and to relieve the enormous suffering that's taking place. And I wanted to express our appreciation to the Kuwaiti people for the enormous humanitarian support that they've provided to Syrian refugees.

We also had an opportunity to discuss other regional issues, for example, our continued efforts to facilitate negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians and arrive at a peace deal in that part of the world. We appreciated the Amir's wisdom in engaging with the Government of Iraq and helping to improve and create peaceful relations between Kuwait and Iraq.

And we also discussed ways that we can improve the economic prospects for people in the region in countries like Yemen, for example, that are experiencing great challenges.

So we appreciate the strength and leadership of Kuwait and its friendship. And we are looking forward to extensive cooperation in the future.

Amir Sabah. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to President Obama for the warm welcome and hospitality. I am happy to refer to the productive and constructive talk between myself and President Obama, which included topics related to our bilateral relations where we renewed the determination to achieve what is the best for the mutual interests of our both countries.

We also discussed the continued detention of the two Kuwaiti detainees in Guantanamo, and asked President Obama to speed up the process of releasing them in line with the President's commitment of closing down Guantanamo and also in line with the assurances given by the Kuwaiti authorities.

We also expressed our satisfaction with the positive developments related to the Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations. We also discussed the subject of the security of the Gulf region and our combined efforts to achieve security, stability, and development in this important, active region, especially taking into consideration the current development in the region.

Additionally, we also discussed the harsh humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and the continuation of the ongoing humanitarian deterioration in Syria and suffering of the refugees and the importance of interlacing all efforts in a speedy manner to reach a peaceful solution and keep the region free from the danger of war.

We also discussed the importance of achieving security and stability in the Arab Republic of Egypt and support all the constructive efforts in this roadmap. We also discussed the peace process in the Middle East and the importance of focusing all international efforts to advance the planned negotiations to create positive elements in this regard and the continued efforts of the United States of America in the peace process. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov of Russia. Amir Sabah referred to Faez al-Kandari and Fawzi al-Odah, Kuwaiti nationals in U.S. custody at the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention facility. Amir Sabah spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Resignation of Eugene B. Sperling as Director of the National Economic Council and the Appointment of Jeffrey D. Zients as Director of the National Economic Council
September 13, 2013

Over the past 4½ years, Gene has been one of my closest advisors and a close friend. Gene understands better than anybody that our top priority as a nation is making sure that our economy once again works for working Americans. Gene's impact in this administration began at Treasury, where he helped us avoid a second Great Depression and led efforts to pass a Small Business Jobs Act to help entrepreneurs grow. He has been a tireless proponent of efforts to strengthen the recovery and make our Tax Code more fair, whether in helping to design the payroll tax cut, fighting for job-creating tax credits for tens of millions of hard-working Americans or developing the "American Jobs Act." He was central to designing policies to help support the housing recovery and was a driving force behind our manufacturing agenda and our efforts to attract jobs and investment to the United States.

Gene's relentless work ethic, sharp intellect, and ability to work across the aisle have been instrumental in our efforts to build a better bargain for the middle class and reduce the deficit while also protecting the most vulnerable. I want to thank Gene and his family for their service, and I look forward to having his counsel for the rest of the year.

Today I'm also proud to name Jeff Zients as the next Director of the National Economic Council. Before heading up the Office of Management and Budget, Jeff spent decades as a successful entrepreneur in the private sector. Jeff has a sterling reputation as a business leader, and he earned the admiration and respect of everyone he worked with during his 4 years in leadership positions at the Office of Management and Budget. I am certain that in Jeff's hands we will continue to have strong leadership of our economic policy team, and his advice will be critical as we keep moving this country forward and building an economy where everyone who works hard can get ahead.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a biography of Mr. Zients.

The President's Weekly Address
September 14, 2013

This week, when I addressed the Nation on Syria, I said that, in part because of the credible threat of U.S. military force, there is the possibility of a diplomatic solution. Russia has indicated a new willingness to join with the international community in pushing Syria to give up its chemical weapons, which the Asad regime used in an attack that killed more than a thousand people on August 21. I also asked Congress to postpone a vote on the use of military force while we pursue this diplomatic path. And that's what we're doing.

At my direction, Secretary of State Kerry is in discussions with his Russian counterpart. But we're making it clear that this can't be a stalling tactic. Any agreement needs to verify that the Asad regime and Russia are keeping their commitments. That means working to turn Syria's chemical weapons over to international control and ultimately destroying them. This would allow us to achieve our goal: deterring the Syrian regime from using chemical weapons, degrading their ability to use them, and making it clear to the world that we won't tolerate their use.

We've seen indications of progress. As recently as a week ago, the Asad regime would not admit that it possessed chemical weapons. Today, it does. Syria has signaled a willingness to join with 189 other nations, representing 98 percent of humanity, in abiding by an international agreement that prohibits the use of

chemical weapons. And Russia has staked its own credibility on supporting this outcome.

These are all positive developments. We'll keep working with the international community to see that Asad gives up his chemical weapons so that they can be destroyed. We will continue rallying support from allies around the world who agree on the need for action to deter the use of chemical weapons in Syria. And if current discussions produce a serious plan, I'm prepared to move forward with it.

But we are not just going to take Russia and Asad's word for it. We need to see concrete actions to demonstrate that Asad is serious about giving up his chemical weapons. And since this plan emerged only with a credible threat of U.S. military action, we will maintain our military posture in the region to keep the pressure on the Asad regime. And if diplomacy fails, the United States and the international community must remain prepared to act.

The use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world is an affront to human dignity and a threat to the security of people everywhere. As I have said for weeks, the international community must respond to this outrage. A dictator must not be allowed to gas children in their beds with impunity. And we cannot risk poison gas becoming the new weapon of choice for tyrants and terrorists the world over.

We have a duty to preserve a world free from the fear of chemical weapons for our children. But if there is any chance of achieving that goal without resorting to force, then I believe we have a responsibility to pursue that path. Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on September 13 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on September 14. In the address, the President referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov of Russia. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 13, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 14.

Statement on the Framework Agreement Between Russia and the United States on the Elimination of Chemical Weapons in Syria
September 14, 2013

I welcome the progress made between the United States and Russia through our talks in Geneva, which represents an important, concrete step toward the goal of moving Syria's chemical weapons under international control so that they may ultimately be destroyed. This framework provides the opportunity for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons in a transparent, expeditious, and verifiable manner, which could end the threat these weapons pose not only to the Syrian people, but to the region and the world. The international community expects the Asad regime to live up to its public commitments.

While we have made important progress, much more work remains to be done. The United States will continue working with Russia, the United Kingdom, France, the United Nations, and others to ensure that this process is verifiable and that there are consequences should the Asad regime not comply with the framework agreed today. And if diplomacy fails, the United States remains prepared to act.

Following the Asad regime's use of chemical weapons to kill more than 1,000 men, women, and children on August 21, I decided that the United States must take action to deter the Syrian regime from using chemical weapons, degrade their ability to use them, and make clear to the world that we will not tolerate their use. In part because of the credible threat of U.S. military force, we now have the opportunity to achieve our objectives through diplomacy. I spoke to Secretary Kerry earlier today and thanked him for his tireless and effective efforts on behalf of our Nation. I also spoke to Ambassador Samantha Power, who will ably lead our follow-on negotiations at the U.N. Security Council in New York.

The use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world is an affront to human dignity and a threat to the security of people everywhere. We have a duty to preserve a world free from the fear of chemical weapons for our children. Today marks an important step towards achieving this goal.

NOTE: The statement referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing in Birmingham, Alabama
September 15, 2013

Today we remember Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley, who were killed 50 years ago in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. That horrific day in Birmingham, Alabama, quickly became a defining moment for the civil rights movement. It galvanized Americans all across the country to stand up for equality and broadened support for a movement that would eventually lead to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Earlier this year, I was honored to meet with family members of those four precious little girls as America posthumously awarded them the Congressional Gold Medal, one of our Nation's highest civilian honors.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 360, approved May 24, which was assigned Public Law No. 113–11.

Statement on the Withdrawal of Lawrence H. Summers From Consideration To Be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
September 15, 2013

Earlier today I spoke with Larry Summers and accepted his decision to withdraw his name from consideration for Chairman of the Federal Reserve. Larry was a critical member of my team as we faced down the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and it was in no small part because of his expertise, wisdom, and leadership that we wrestled the economy back to growth and made the kind of progress we are seeing today. I will always be grateful to Larry for his tireless work and service on behalf of his country, and I look forward to continuing to seek his guidance and counsel in the future.

Remarks on the National Economy
September 16, 2013

Shooting at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, DC

Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. Before I begin, let me say a few words about the tragedy that's unfolding not far away from here at the Washington Navy Yard. Now, that's part of why our event today was delayed.

I've been briefed by my team on the situation. We still don't know all the facts, but we do know that several people have been shot and some have been killed. So we are confronting yet another mass shooting, and today it happened on a military installation in our Nation's Capital.

It's a shooting that targeted our military and civilian personnel. These are men and women who were going to work, doing their job, protecting all of us. They're patriots, and they know the dangers of serving abroad, but today they faced the unimaginable violence that they wouldn't have expected here at home.

So we offer our gratitude to the Navy and local law enforcement, Federal authorities, and the doctors who have responded with skill and bravery. I've made it clear to my team that I want the investigation to be seamless so that Federal and local authorities are working together. And as this investigation moves forward, we will do everything in our power to make sure whoever carried out this cowardly act is held responsible.

In the meantime, we send our thoughts and prayers to all at the Navy Yard who have been touched by this tragedy. We thank them for their service. We stand with the families of those who have been harmed. They're going to need our love and support. And as we learn more about the courageous Americans who died today—their lives, their families, their patriotism—we will honor their service to the Nation they helped to make great. And obviously, we're going to be investigating thoroughly what happened, as we do so many of these shootings, sadly, that have happened, and do everything that we can to try to prevent them.

Situation in Syria

Now, in recent weeks, much of our attention has been focused on the events in Syria: the horrible use of chemical weapons on innocent people, including children, the need for a firm response from the international community. And over the weekend, we took an important step in that direction towards moving Syria's chemical weapons under international control so that they can be destroyed. And we're not there yet, but if properly implemented, this agreement could end the threat these weapons pose not only to the Syrian people, but to the world.

National Economy

I want to be clear, though, that even as we've dealt with the situation in Syria, we've continued to focus on my number-one priority since the day I took office: making sure we recover from the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes and rebuilding our economy so it works for everybody who is willing to work hard; so that everybody who is willing to take responsibility for their lives has a chance to get ahead.

It was 5 years ago this week that the financial crisis rocked Wall Street and sent an economy already into recession into a tailspin. And it's hard sometimes to remember everything that happened during those months, but in a matter of a frightening few days and weeks, some of the largest investment banks in the world failed. Stock markets plunged. Banks stopped lending to families and small businesses. Our auto industry—the heartbeat of American manufacturing—was flatlining.

By the time I took office, the economy was shrinking by an annual rate of more than 8 percent. Our businesses were shedding 800,000 jobs each month. It was a perfect storm that would rob millions of Americans of jobs and homes and savings that they had worked a lifetime to build. And it also laid bare the long erosion of a middle class that, for more than a decade, has had to work harder and harder just to keep up.

In fact, most Americans who've known economic hardship these past several years, they don't think about the collapse of Lehman Brothers when they think about the recession. Instead, they recall the day they got the gut punch of a pink slip or the day a bank took away their home; the day they got sick, but didn't have health insurance or the day they had to sit their daughter or son down and tell him or her that they couldn't afford to send their child back to college the next semester.

And so those are the stories that guided everything we've done. It's what in those earliest days of the crisis caused us to act so quickly through the Recovery Act to arrest the downward spiral and put a floor under the fall. We put people to work repairing roads and bridges, to keep teachers in our classrooms, our first responders on the streets. We helped responsible homeowners modify their mortgages so that more of them could keep their homes. We helped jump-start the flow of credit to help more small businesses keep their doors open. We saved the American auto industry.

And as we worked to stabilize the economy and get it growing and creating jobs again, we also started pushing back against the trends that have been battering the middle class for decades. So we took on a broken health care system. We invested in new American technologies to end our addiction to foreign oil. We put in place tough new rules on big banks—rules that we need to finalize before the end of the year, by the way, to make sure that the job is done—and we put in new protections that cracked down on the worst practices of mortgage lenders and credit card companies. We also changed a Tax Code that was too skewed in favor of the wealthiest Americans. We locked in tax cuts for 98 percent of Americans. We asked those at the top to pay a little bit more.

So if you add it all up, over the last 3½ years, our businesses have added 7½ million new jobs. The unemployment rate has come down. Our housing market is healing. Our financial system is safer. We sell more goods made in America to the rest of the world than ever before. We generate more renewable energy than ever before. We produce more natural gas than anybody.

Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. And just 2 weeks from now, millions of Americans who have been locked out of buying health insurance just because they had a preexisting condition, just because they had been sick or they couldn't afford it, they're finally going to have a chance to buy quality, affordable health care on the private marketplace. And what all this means is we've cleared away the rubble from the financial crisis and we've begun to lay a new foundation for economic growth and prosperity.

And in our personal lives, I think a lot of us understand that people have tightened their belts, shed debt, refocused on the things that really matter. All of this happened because ultimately of the resilience and the grit of the American people. And we should be proud of that. And on this 5-year anniversary, we should take note of how far we've come from where we were 5 years ago.

But that's not the end of the story. As any middle class family will tell you, or anybody who's striving to get into the middle class, we are not yet where we need to be. And that's what we've got to focus on: all the remaining work that needs to be done to strengthen this economy.

We need to grow faster. We need more good-paying jobs. We need more broad-based prosperity. We need more ladders of opportunity for people who are currently poor, but want to get into the middle class. Because even though our businesses are creating new jobs and have broken record profits, the top 1 percent of Americans took home 20 percent of the Nation's income last year, while the average worker isn't seeing a raise at all. In fact, that understates the problem. Most of the gains have gone to the top one-tenth of 1 percent.

So, in many ways, the trends that have taken hold over the past few decades of a winner-take-all economy, where a few do better and better and better while everybody else just treads water or loses ground, those trends have been made worse by the recession.

That's what we should be focused on. That's what I'm focused on. That's what I know the Americans standing beside me, as well as all of you out there, are focused on. And as Congress begins another budget debate, that's what Congress should be focused on. How do we grow the economy faster? How do we create better jobs? How do we increase wages and incomes? How do we increase opportunity for those who have been locked out of opportunity? How do we create better retirement security? That's what we should be focused on, because the stakes for our middle class and everybody who's fighting to get into the middle class could not be higher.

In today's hypercompetitive world, we have to make the investments necessary to attract good jobs that pay good wages and offer high standards of living. And although ultimately our success will depend on all the innovation and hard work of our private sector—all that grit and resilience of the American people—government is going to have a critical role in making sure we have an education system that prepares our children and our workers for a global economy.

The budget Congress passes will determine whether we can hire more workers to upgrade our transportation and communications networks or fund the kinds of research and development that have always kept America on the cutting edge. So what happens here in Washington makes a difference. What happens up on Capitol Hill is going to help determine not only the pace of our growth, but also the quality of jobs, the quality of opportunity for this generation and future generations.

The problem is, at the moment, Republicans in Congress don't seem to be focused on how to grow the economy and build the middle class. I say "at the moment," because I'm still hoping that a light bulb goes off here. [*Laughter*]

So far, their budget ideas revolve primarily around even deeper cuts to education, even deeper cuts that would gut America's scientific research and development, even deeper cuts to America's infrastructure investment: our roads, our bridges, our schools, our energy grid. These aren't the policies that would grow the economy faster. They're not the policies that would help grow the middle class. In fact, they'd do the opposite.

Up until now, Republicans have argued that these cuts are necessary in the name of fiscal responsibility. But our deficits are now falling at the fastest rate since the end of World War II. I want to repeat that. Our deficits are going down faster than any time since before I was born. By the end of this year, we will have cut our deficits by more than half since I took office.

Now, that doesn't mean that we don't still have some long-term fiscal challenges, primarily because the population is getting older and they're using more health care services. And so we've still got some changes that we've got to make, and there's not a Government agency or program out there that still can't be streamlined, become more customer friendly, more efficient. So I do believe we should cut out programs that we don't need. We need to fix ones that aren't working the way they're supposed to or have outlived their initial mission. We've got to make Government faster and more efficient.

But that's not what is being proposed by the Republican budgets. Instead of making necessary changes with a scalpel, so far at least, Republicans have chosen to leave in place the so-called sequester cuts that have cost jobs, harmed growth, are hurting our military readiness. And top independent economists say this has been a big drag on our recovery this year. Our economy is not growing as fast as it should and we're not creating as many jobs as we should, because the sequester is in place. That's not my opinion, that's the opinion of independent economists.

The sequester makes it harder to do what's required to boost wages for American workers, because the economy is still slack. So if Republicans want the economy to grow faster, create more jobs faster, they should want to get rid of it. It's irresponsible to keep it in place.

And if Congress is serious about wanting to grow the economy faster and creating jobs faster, the first order of business must be to pass a sensible budget that replaces the sequester with a balanced plan that is both fiscally sound and funds the investments like education and basic research and infrastructure that we need to grow. Now, this is not asking too much.

Congress's most fundamental job is passing a budget. And Congress needs to get it done without triggering another crisis, without shutting down our Government or, worse, threatening not to pay this country's bills. After all the progress that we've made over these last 4½ years, the idea of reversing that progress because of an unwillingness to compromise or because of some ideological agenda is the height of irresponsibility. It's not what the American people need right now.

These folks standing behind me, these are people who are small-business owners, people who almost lost their home, young people trying to get a college education, and all of them went through some real tough times during the recession. And in part because of the steps we took and primarily because of their courage and determination and hard work, they're in a better place now.

But the last thing they're looking for is for us to go back to the same kind of crisis situations

that we've had in the past. And the single most important thing we can do to prevent that is for Congress to pass a budget, without drama, that puts us on a sound path for growth, jobs, better wages, better incomes.

Now, look, it's never been easy to get 535 people here in Washington to agree on anything. And budget battles and debates, those are as old as the Republic. It's even harder when you have divided Government. And right now you've got Republicans controlling the House of Representatives and Democrats controlling the Senate, Democrat in the White House. So this is always going to be tough.

Having said that, I cannot remember a time when one faction of one party promises economic chaos if it can't get a hundred percent of what it wants. That's never happened before. But that's what's happening right now.

You have some Republicans in the House of Representatives who are promising to shut down the Government at the end of this month if they can't shut down the Affordable Care Act. And if that scheme doesn't work, some have suggested they won't pay the very bills that Congressmen—Congress has already run up, which would cause America to default on its debt for the first time in our history and would create massive economic turmoil. Interest rates on ordinary people would shoot up. Those kinds of actions are the kinds of actions that we don't need.

The last time this same crew threatened this course of action back in 2011, even the mere suggestion of default slowed our economic growth. Everybody here remembers that. It wasn't that long ago.

Now, keep in mind, initially, the whole argument was we're going to do this because we want to reduce our debt. That doesn't seem to be the focus now. Now the focus is on Obamacare. So let's put this in perspective. The Affordable Care Act has been the law for 3½ years now. It passed both Houses of Congress. The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional. It was an issue in last year's election, and the candidate who called for repeal lost. [*Laughter*] The Republicans in the House have tried to repeal or sabotage it about 40 times. They've failed every time.

Meanwhile, the law has already helped millions of Americans: young people who were able to stay on their parent's plan up until the age of 26; seniors who are getting additional discounts on their prescription drugs; ordinary families and small businesses that are getting rebates from insurance companies because now insurance companies have to actually spend money on people's care instead of on administrative costs and CEO bonuses.

A lot of the horror stories that were predicted about how this was going to shoot rates way up and there were going to be death panels and all that stuff—none of that stuff has happened. And in 2 weeks, the Affordable Care Act is going to help millions of more people. And there's no serious evidence that the law—which has helped to keep down the rise in health care costs to their lowest level in 50 years—is holding back economic growth.

So repealing the Affordable Care Act, making sure that 30 million people don't get health insurance and people with preexisting conditions continue to be locked out of the health insurance market, that's not an agenda for economic growth. You're not going to meet an economist who says that that's the number-one priority in terms of boosting growth and jobs in this country—at least, not a serious economist.

And I understand I will never convince some Republicans about the merits of Obamacare. I understand that. And I'm more than willing to work with them where they've got specific suggestions that they can show will make our health care system work better. Remember, initially, this was, like, repeal and replace, and the replace thing has kind of gone off to the wayside. Now it's just repeal.

But the larger point is, after all that we've been through these past 5 years, after all the work Americans like those standing behind me have done to come back from the depths of a crisis, are some of these folks really so beholden to one extreme wing of their party that they're willing to tank the entire economy just because they can't get their way on this issue?

Are they really willing to hurt people just to score political points? I hope not.

But in case there's any confusion, I will not negotiate over whether or not America keeps its word and meets its obligations. I will not negotiate over the full faith and credit of the United States. This country has worked too hard for too long to dig out of a crisis just to see their elected representatives here in Washington purposely cause another crisis.

Let's stop the threats. Let's stop the political posturing. Let's keep our Government open. Let's pay our bills on time. Let's pass a budget. Let's work together to do what the American people sent us here to do: create jobs, grow our economy, expand opportunity. That's what we need to do.

And as far as the budget goes, it's time for responsible Republicans who share these goals—and there are a number of folks out there who, I think, are decent folks, I've got some disagreements with them on some issues, but I think genuinely want to see the economy grow and want what's best for the American people—it's time for those Republicans to step up, and they've got to decide what they want to prioritize.

Originally, they said they wanted deficit reduction. As I said before, our deficits are falling fast. The only way to make further long-term progress on deficit reduction that doesn't slow growth is with a balanced plan that includes closing tax loopholes that benefit corporations and the wealthiest Americans at the expense of the middle class. That's the only way to do it.

They said that they wanted entitlement reform, but their leaders haven't put forward serious ideas that wouldn't devastate Medicare or Social Security. And I've put forward ideas for sensible reforms to Medicare and Social Security and haven't gotten a lot of feedback yet.

They said that they wanted tax reform. Remember? This was just a few months ago. They said, well, this is going to be one of our top priorities: tax reform. Six weeks ago, I put forward a plan that serious people in both parties should be able to support, a deal that lowers the corporate tax rate for businesses and manufacturers, simplifies it for small-business owners, as long as we use some of the money that we save to invest in the infrastructure our businesses need to create more good jobs and good wages for middle class folks who work at these businesses. My position is, if folks in this town want a grand bargain, how about a grand bargain for middle class jobs? So I put forward ideas for tax reform; haven't heard back from them yet.

Now, Congress has a couple of weeks to get this done. If they're focused on what the American people care about—faster growth, more jobs, better future for our kids—then I'm confident it will happen. And once we're done with the budget, let's focus on the other things that we know can make a difference for middle class families: lowering the cost of college, finishing the job of immigration reform, taking up the work of tax reform to make the system fairer, and promoting more investment in the United States.

If we follow the strategy I'm laying out for our entire economy—and if Washington will just act with the same urgency and common purpose that we felt 5 years ago—then our economy will be stronger a year from now, 5 years from now, a decade from now.

That's my priority. All these folks standing behind me and everybody out there who's listening, that's my priority. I've run my last election. My only interest at this point is making sure that the economy is moving the way it needs to so that we've got the kind of broad-based growth that has always been the hallmark of this country.

And as long as I've got the privilege of serving as your President, I will spend every moment of every day I have left fighting to restore security and opportunity for the middle class and to give everyone who works hard a chance to get ahead.

Thank you, everybody. And God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Slovakia-United States Social Security Agreement
September 17, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95–216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)) (the "Social Security Act"), I transmit herewith an Agreement on Social Security between the United States of America and the Slovak Republic (the "United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement"). The Agreement consists of two separate instruments: a principal agreement and an administrative arrangement. The Agreement was signed in Bratislava on December 10, 2012.

The United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement is similar in objective to the social security totalization agreements already in force with most European Union countries, Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Norway, and the Republic of Korea. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation and to help prevent the lost benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries. The United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement contains all provisions mandated by section 233 of the Social Security Act and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4) of the Social Security Act.

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the provisions of the principal agreement and administrative arrangement. Annexed to this report is another report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act on the effect of the United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement on income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program and the number of individuals affected by the United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 17, 2013.

Remarks to the Business Roundtable
September 18, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Well, Jim, thank you for the introduction. Thanks to Dave and Andrew and John, all the men and women of the Business Roundtable. I've had a chance to not only present before this body before, but many of you have been doing wonderful work with the administration on a whole range of issues. And the point that Jim just made about the commitment that some of the companies here have made in hiring and promoting our returning veterans is extraordinary. And so we're very, very grateful for that.

Last time I was here in December, I told you—once the mikes were working—[*laughter*]—that I'm hugely invested in your success, because this room represents not only an enormous amount of economic output, but also represents the hopes and dreams of people who are working very hard trying to make a living, small businesses who are supplying large companies like yours. When you succeed, when you're doing well, when you're competitive at a global scale, then America can do well also. And so we want to be a consistent partner

with you on a whole range of issues, and we have.

If you think about where we were 5 years ago—obviously, we're marking the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Lehman's, and that triggered the worst financial crisis and then, ultimately, worst economic crisis that we've seen in our lifetimes—I think it's fair to say that we've come a long way.

At that point, the auto industry was flatlining. You had the entire financial sector locked up. A number of banks were in deep trouble. And most acutely for ordinary families all across this country, they were losing jobs, losing homes, losing their life savings. And there was a genuine fear across the board that we might not be able to pull out way out of it.

And we have. Thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, thanks to some outstanding work that's been done by many of your companies, we are in a much stronger position now than when we were then. And we've created now 7½ million new jobs in the private sector. Many of your companies have added to your payrolls. And that's made a huge difference.

We've seen quarters of consecutive growth that are still too slow, not as fast as we'd like, but relative to other developed countries around the world, as we've actually fared a lot better. The housing market has begun to recover. Exports are at record highs. We are producing more energy than we ever have before. And although in a world energy market, for us to say that we're entirely energy independent is a little bit of a misnomer. What's absolutely true is, is that the geopolitics of energy have shifted, and that's strengthened our manufacturing base here and made it a much more attractive place for us to invest.

The deficits have been coming down at the fastest rate since World War II. The deficit has been cut in half since I came into office. Health care costs, which were and continue to be a major source of concern, are increasing at the slowest rate in 50 years. And for many of you in terms of your bottom lines, employer-based health care plans have gone up at about a third of what they were going up when I first took office.

And so there's a lot of bright spots in the economy; a lot of progress has been made and a lot of good news to report. But I think what we all recognize is, we're not where we need to be yet. We've still got a lot of work to do. And we know what it is that we need to do. We know that if we implement immigration reform, that that can add potentially a trillion dollars to our economy and that we will continue to attract the best and brightest talent around the world.

We know that we can do even more when it comes to exports, which is why I'm out there negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership and now a transatlantic trade partnership that will allow us to create a high-standard, enforceable, meaningful trade agreement with essentially two-thirds of the world markets, which is going to be incredibly powerful for American companies who, up until this point, have often been locked out of those markets.

We know that we've still got to make a lot of progress when it comes to our education system. And I want to thank the BRT because you've worked with us on issues like creating a common cause—a common core that ensures that every young person in America has the opportunity to get prepared for the kinds of jobs that are going to exist in the 21st century. And I'm going to be talking to all of you a lot to work with us in making college much more affordable, because just as we've had to take a hard look at what we can do to start bringing down health care costs, we've also got to start taking a hard look at what we're going to do to bring down college costs. We now have over a trillion dollars' worth of student loan debt that is hampering the economy, preventing young people from buying homes, starting families, and spending money buying your products.

The good news is that every one of the challenges that we confront, every one of the barriers—whether it's education, immigration, infrastructure—that prevent us from being as competitive as we could be, they're all solvable. We have good ideas. There's actually pretty good consensus in terms of how we might

move forward. The problem is right now that this town, Washington, is locked up. And we are not seeing the kind of progress that we should on these issues.

So immigration is the most obvious example. We have bipartisan agreement; we got a bill passed out of the Senate. It's sitting there in the House, and if Speaker Boehner called that bill today, it would pass. We've got a majority of the House of Representatives that's prepared to vote for it, and we could transform our immigration system in a way that would be really good for your companies and really good for our economy.

The reason it's not happening is because there's a small faction that insists that our tradition as a nation of laws, but also a nation of immigrants somehow is un-American, and they oppose it. And that duplicates itself on a whole range of these issues. And now, in the next several weeks, it's going to manifest itself in what is going to be probably the most critical debate about our economy over the next several months, and that is what we do about our budget. So let me just speak very briefly to that issue.

As I said before, our deficits are coming down very fast. In fact, the IMF and other international organizations that had cautioned us previously about our deficits are actually now concerned that we're bringing our deficits down too fast. That's the assessment of the economists. On the current trajectory that we're on and if we were to pass the budget that I put forward, our deficits would continue to go down. And we would have a deficit-to-GDP ratio below 3 percent, which is typically the standard at which it's sustainable.

Now, in order for us to do that we've got to do a couple of things. Number one, we've got to continue to be tightfisted when it comes to spending on things we don't need. We've got to continue to streamline Government. We've got to continue to cut out waste. And there's waste to be had, and there are programs that don't work or used to work and are now obsolete and we should eliminate. And we've identified a whole range of programs that we want to eliminate and programs that we'd like to consolidate.

But what is also true is, is that if we're going to be honest about our debt and our deficits, our real problem is the long term, not the short term. We're not overspending on education. We're not overspending on research and development. We're not overspending on helping the disabled. Those things have all been flat for a long time or are coming down. Our challenge has to do with our long-term entitlement programs and mostly have to do with our health care costs.

So the fact that the Affordable Care Act has been put into place and that many of you are taking steps within your own companies, we're seeing health care costs come down. We're still going to have to do a little bit more, because the population is aging and demographics means that people are going to be using more health care costs and the Government is going to have to grapple with that. That's a long term challenge.

The budget I put forward actually proposes some smart fixes on Medicare, some smart fixes on Medicaid, and creates a sustainable path where we continue to invest in the things we need to grow—education, infrastructure, research and development—deals with our long-term structural deficits that arise out of entitlements, and put us in a strong position for decades to come.

The problem we have right now is that, again, that same faction in Congress is no longer talking about debt and deficits when it comes to resolving the budget. Initially, this was an argument about how much we spend on discretionary spending, how much do we spend on defense; you could sit down across the table, try to negotiate some numbers. That's no longer the argument. What we now have is a ideological fight that's been mounted in the House of Representatives that says, we're not going to pass a budget and we will threaten a Government shutdown unless we repeal the Affordable Care Act.

We have not seen this in the past that a budget is contingent on us eliminating a program that was voted on, passed by both Chambers of Congress, ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court, is 2 weeks from being fully implement-

ed, and that helps 30 million people finally get health care coverage. We've never seen that become the issue around a budget battle. And so that's a—right now the primary roadblock to resolving the budget.

What's worse, that same faction has said, if we can't succeed in shutting the Government down and leveraging that to eliminate the Affordable Care Act, we may be prepared to let the Government default on our debt.

Now, this debt ceiling—I just want to remind people in case you haven't been keeping up—raising the debt ceiling, which has been done over a hundred times, does not increase our debt; it does not somehow promote profligacy. All it does is it says you got to pay the bills that you've already racked up, Congress. It's a basic function of making sure that the full faith and credit of the United States is preserved.

And I've heard people say, well, in the past, there have been negotiations around raising the debt ceiling. It's always a tough vote, because the average person thinks raising the debt ceiling must mean that we're running up our debt, so people don't like to vote on it, and, typically, there's some gamesmanship in terms of making the President's party shoulder the burden of raising the—taking the vote. And then there's some political campaign later that smacks him around for saying, Joe Smith voted to raise the debt ceiling by $2 trillion. And it sounds terrible, and it's a fun talking point for politics, but it always gets done.

And if there is a budget package that includes the debt ceiling vote, it's not the debt ceiling that is driving the negotiations, it's just, it's stuck into the budget negotiations, because if you're going to take a bunch of tough votes anyway, you might as well go ahead and stick that in there.

You have never seen in the history of the United States the debt ceiling or the threat of not raising the debt ceiling being used to extort a President or a governing party, and trying to force issues that have nothing to do with the budget and have nothing to do with the debt.

So here's where we are, and I think this is the bottom line, and I want to make sure everybody is clear here: I have presented a budget that deals with—continues to deal with—our deficit effectively. I am prepared to work with Democrats and Republicans to deal with our long-term entitlement issues. And I am prepared to look at priorities that the Republicans think we should be promoting and priorities that they think we should be—we shouldn't be promoting. So I'm happy to negotiate with them around the budget, just as I've done in the past.

What I will not do is to create a habit, a pattern, whereby the full faith and credit of the United States ends up being a bargaining chip to set policy. It's irresponsible. The last time we did this in 2011, we had negative growth at a time when the recovery was just trying to take off. And it would fundamentally change how American government functions.

And if you doubt that, just flip the script for a second and imagine a situation in which a Democratic Speaker said to a Republican President, I'm not going to increase the debt ceiling unless you increase corporate taxes by 20 percent. And if you don't do it, we'll default on the debt and cause a worldwide financial crisis. Even though that Democratic Speaker didn't have the votes to force through that particular piece of legislation, they would simply say, we will blow the whole thing up unless you do what I want. That can't be a recipe for governing.

And I have responsibilities at this point not just to the current generation, but to future generations, and we're not going to set up a situation where the full faith and credit of the United States is put on the table every year or every year and a half and we go through some sort of terrifying financial brinksmanship because of some ideological arguments that people are having about some particular issue of the day. We're not going to do that.

So the good news is that we can raise the debt ceiling tomorrow just by a simple vote in each Chamber and set that aside, and then we can have a serious argument about the budget. And there are significant differences still between Republicans and Democrats when it comes to the budget.

But it is going to be important for all of you, I think, over the next several weeks, to understand what's at stake and to make sure that you are using your influence in whatever way you can to get back to what's—what used to be called regular order around here: doing things in a way that reflect the genuine, messy negotiations of democracy, but did not promise apocalypse every 3 months. And I think this is the time for us to say once and for all, we can't afford these kinds of plays.

I know the American people are tired of it. I'm tired of it, and I suspect you're tired of it too, because it's pretty hard to plan your businesses when these kinds of things are looming at any given moment.

So with that, let me stop and let me open it up for questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:46 a.m. at the headquarters of the Business Roundtable. In his remarks, he referred to W. James McNerney, Jr., chairman, David M. Cote and Andrew N. Liveris, vice chairs, and former Gov. John M. Engler of Michigan, in his capacity as president, Business Roundtable. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary did not include the question-and-answer session that followed the President's remarks.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism

September 18, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism declared in Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001, is to continue in effect beyond September 23, 2013.

The crisis constituted by the grave acts of terrorism and threats of terrorism committed by foreign terrorists, including the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in New York and Pennsylvania and against the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on United States nationals or the United States that led to the declaration of a national emergency on September 23, 2001, has not been resolved. These actions continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13224 with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 18, 2013.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Memorandum on Provision of Atomic Information to Croatia
September 18, 2013

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Provision of Atomic Information to Croatia

In your August 12, 2013, memorandum you recommended that I approve, pursuant to sections 123 and 144 b. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, an agreement for cooperation authorizing the exchange of U.S. Restricted Data and Formerly Restricted Data within the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as between the Government of the United States and the following new member of NATO: the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter the "New Party"). The subject agreement is the Agreement Between the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty for Cooperation Regarding Atomic Information, including a technical annex and security annex (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "ATOMAL Agreement"), which entered into force on March 12, 1965, with respect to the United States and the other members of NATO at that time.

Having considered your recommendations and the cooperation provided in the ATOMAL Agreement with respect to the New Party, in accordance with sections 123 and 144 b. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, I hereby:

a. determine that the performance of the ATOMAL Agreement, including the proposed cooperation and the proposed communication of Restricted Data thereunder with respect to the New Party, will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security;

b. approve the ATOMAL Agreement with respect to the New Party; and

c. authorize the Department of Defense to cooperate with the New Party to the ATOMAL Agreement in the context of NATO upon satisfaction of the requirements of section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Message to the Congress Transmitting an Agreement on Provision of Atomic Information to Croatia
September 18, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, consistent with sections 123 and 144 b. of the Atomic Energy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153 and 2164(b)), the text of the Agreement Between the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty for Cooperation Regarding Atomic Information, including a technical annex and security annex (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "ATOMAL Agreement"), as a proposed agreement for cooperation authorizing the exchange of U.S. Restricted Data and Formerly Restricted Data within the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) between the United States of America and the following member of NATO: the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter the "New Party").

In addition, I am pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the ATOMAL Agreement with respect to the New Party, with a copy of the memorandum of the Secretary of Defense with respect to the agreement. The ATOMAL Agreement entered into force on March 12, 1965, with respect to the United States and the

other NATO members at that time. The Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland, Spain, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, Romania, the Slovak Republic, and the Republic of Slovenia subsequently became parties to the ATOMAL Agreement. The New Party has signed this agreement and has indicated its willingness to be bound by it. The ATOMAL Agreement with respect to the New Party meets the requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended. Although the ATOMAL Agreement continues in force with respect to the United States and the other current parties to it, it will not become effective as an agreement for cooperation authorizing the exchange of atomic information with respect to the New Party until completion of procedures prescribed by sections 123 and 144 b. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended.

For more than 40 years, the ATOMAL Agreement has served as the framework within which NATO and the other NATO members that have become parties to this agreement have received the information that is necessary to an understanding and knowledge of, and participation in, the political and strategic consensus upon which the collective military capacity of the Alliance depends. This agreement permits only the transfer of atomic information, not weapons, nuclear material, or equipment. Participation in the ATOMAL Agreement will give the New Party the same standing within the Alliance with regard to nuclear matters as that of the other current parties to the ATOMAL Agreement. This is important for the cohesiveness of the Alliance and will enhance its effectiveness.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the Department of Defense (DOD) and other interested agencies in reviewing the ATOMAL Agreement and have determined that its performance, including the proposed cooperation and the proposed communication of Restricted Data thereunder with respect to the New Party, will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the ATOMAL Agreement with respect to the New Party and authorized the DOD to cooperate with the New Party in the context of NATO upon satisfaction of the requirements of section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended.

The 60-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 begins upon receipt of this submission.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 18, 2013.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks at a Meeting of the President's Export Council
September 19, 2013

The President. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, it is good to see all of you. I know that we've got a——

[*At this point, Export Council Chairman W. James McNerney, Jr., reached over and turned on the President's microphone*].

The President. Whoops. All right.

Chairman McNerney. There you go.

The President. I know that we've got a few new members, in fact, some folks that were just appointed and immediately got to work. And so we're thrilled to see all of you. And then there are the grizzled veterans of the Export Council—[*laughter*]—although you don't look grizzled. You guys look great.

Obviously, I want to thank Jim and Ursula at the outset for their outstanding leadership in this entire process. This week marks the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Lehman Brothers and an incredible financial crisis that devastated not just the financial sector, but the en-

tire economy, and people lost jobs and homes and savings.

And for the last 5 years, we have worked our way back because of the incredible grit and resilience of the American people, because the outstanding dynamism of our business sectors, because of, I think, some timely work on the part of this administration and other agencies to make sure that we were responsive to the immediate needs of the American people, but also looking at how we can start initiating some structural changes that are going to make a difference over the long term and rebuild our economy.

We're not where we need to be yet. But with 7½ million new jobs created in the private sector, with the housing market beginning to recover, with our energy transformation continuing in a way that, I think, many people would not have anticipated 20 years ago, where we're now at a point where domestic production is actually starting to exceed imports—across all these fronts, there are some very positive pieces of news. But I tell you, one of the biggest bright spots in our economy has been exports: the fact that "Made in America" means something and has provided a boost to our domestic economy and has reminded the world just how competitive we are.

This has been a top priority from the start. Part of the reason we set up this Export Council was to make sure that we were in a position to meet our goal of doubling exports during the course of a fairly short period of time. And we now sell more goods overseas than ever before.

Jason, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think our current account deficit and trade deficits have narrowed as significantly as we've seen in a very long time. Now, part of that is because we're importing less foreign oil and increasing domestic production, but a lot of it is because we're selling a lot of great products all around the world. And this Council has done a great job in helping to guide our policies.

We've got large businesses; we've got small businesses; we've got medium-sized businesses. We've got services as well as manufacturers. And your input has been enormously important in this entire process.

Part of what we've seen is a continued transformation in American business to become more competitive and more productive. And I would be remiss to say, since it's in the news quite a bit—to note that one of the reasons our businesses are more competitive is because health care costs have actually stabilized relative to what we had been seeing in previous years. Just an interesting statistic here for folks who may be interested. [*Laughter*]

Thanks in part to the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare—[*laughter*]—the cost of health care is now growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Employer-based health care costs are growing at about one-third of the rate of a decade ago. And just yesterday CMS estimated that health care spending grew at its second slowest rate ever in 2012, will grow at its third slowest rate ever in 2013, grew at its slowest rate in 2011. So the 3 years since Obamacare passed, we've seen the slowest growth in health care costs on record.

Now, I think this is critically important to recognize because one of the huge competitive disadvantages that our businesses have had is that we—American businesses—oftentimes are shouldering health care costs that their competitors are not, because they've had a more efficient, more effective system. And so for us—and when we passed the Affordable Care Act, by the way, there were all kinds of arguments about how all the cost savings weren't very meaningful and weren't going to do a lot and we weren't really bending the cost curve. And well, it turns out actually a lot of what we've done is starting to bear real fruit, and it has an impact on the bottom lines of American businesses as well as the American people.

So if the current trends hold, and all estimates are that in fact they will—this is not just a byproduct of or hangover from the recession—we're going to see a continuing slowing of increases in health care costs. That's going to boost our exports.

Now, we can still do more when it comes to exports, and thanks in part to new trade deals that I've signed as well as obviously really great products and services that you've all designed,

America now exports more to the rest of the world than ever before. We're on track to export even more this year. Last year, $1 billion in exports supported nearly 50,000 jobs—or 5,000 jobs in the United States. So for every billion dollars that we sell, that's 5,000 new jobs right here in the United States.

And so we're really focused on how do we keep that momentum going. Our new Trade Rep, our new Ambassador, Michael Froman, who many of you have had a chance to work with when he was in the White House, is in the process of trying to complete negotiations around a Trans-Pacific Partnership. You're talking about the largest, most dynamic, fastest growing market in the world.

And because of some incredibly hard work by Michael and the previous Trade Representative, Ron Kirk, we are very far along in trying to get that deal done: raising standards; opening up markets that previously have been closed; getting the kinds of protections, like IPR protections, that are so important to American businesses since we typically are the best innovators; making sure that services are allowed to compete in many of these markets, because we do services better than anybody else and those are markets that oftentimes are the most parochial, most encumbered by regulation and have most frequently been closed.

So we're going to be pushing ahead not only on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, but we also have now our transatlantic effort, where we can see if we can enhance what is already robust trade with Europe. It amounts to the largest trading relationship in the world by far, and we think we can do even better. And so we're going to be moving on that front as well.

We're going to need trade promotion authority through Congress. And this is an area where, so far at least, Mitch McConnell says he's for it, and that's good. And so we may be able to get some good bipartisan support to get that done.

But let me just make a couple of closing comments about how important this Export Council has been. One thing that I think a lot of people aren't aware of, at least until they get involved in policymaking around exports, is tourism is an export. When foreign visitors come here and spend money, that is tallied as a U.S. export. And thanks to people like Bob Iger at Walt Disney and others, we have made enormous progress over the last several years in boosting tourism in the United States, making it easier for foreign visitors to get visas, making it easier for them to come here and enjoy the incredible attractions that we have here in the United States. That's making a big difference. A lot of the ideas about how we could do that were generated from, initially, these efforts.

So I use that as an example just to say that this is not a—just a bunch of show horses here, these are some work horses. And I believe it's fair to say—and I think Jim and Ursula will confirm—that if any of you have good ideas about how we can further promote exports, put them on the table. You will find an administration that is ready and willing to put their shoulder behind the wheel to actually get it done.

And I know that our new Secretary of Commerce, Penny Pritzker, who is coming directly from the business world, understands how important it is for us to be able to execute and not just generate a bunch of white papers that get filed off in some dusty file somewhere. We want to make sure that we're moving on all fronts very aggressively.

So with that, I just want to say how much I appreciate all your participation. I want to say a—make a special note to some of the small businesses that have been represented here, because what we've seen is that when small and medium-sized businesses can cut through the redtape and understand how to export, actually they can compete pretty well. And that's an area where we can make some significant progress.

Obviously, big companies like Xerox or Boeing, we want to keep on growing them because small businesses are up and down the supply chain and are—when we sell a bunch of airplanes, a lot of small businesses and medium-sized businesses are benefiting from that as well.

But I am very enthusiastic about this. I think Jim, at least, will confirm that I'm happy to go

out and make sales. I'm expecting a gold watch—[*laughter*]—from Boeing at the end of my Presidency because I know that I'm on the list of top salesmen at Boeing. And that applies to all of you.

And I also notice that we've got some wonderful elected officials here, folks like Governor Fallin. Part of what we want to do is also coordinate State and Federal and local efforts, because right now our competitors—the Germanys, a lot of the European countries—they have a very tight, very aggressive, very well coordinated effort to make sales around the world. Sometimes, because we're so big and, frankly, we've been such a dominant economy for a long time, that our sales pitches and efforts have been a little more scattered and a little more diffuse.

So one of the functions that this Export Council can serve is as a clearinghouse and a coordinating mechanism to make sure that if Oklahoma is trying to pitch something or help one of their businesses that they are in touch with Federal counterparts and they can do a much more effective job. All right?

So what I think we're going to do now is we're going to clear out the press. I'm going to have a chance to come around and say hello to everybody and say thank you. And then the conversation will continue. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Ursula M. Burns, Vice Chair, President's Export Council; Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Jason L. Furman; Robert A. Iger, chairman and chief executive officer, Walt Disney Co.; and Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma. He also referred to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); and intellectual property rights (IPR).

Remarks at the Ford Motor Company Stamping Plant in Liberty, Missouri
September 20, 2013

The President. Hello, Missouri! Everybody give Jordan a big round of applause.

I just want to say about Jordan—third generation Ford employee—she's going to school during the week, works at the plant on the weekends, getting a degree in business management and will be taking Alan's place running the company in about—[*laughter*]—I don't know—oh, it may take a few years. But we're so proud of her. And congratulations for everything that she represents. When you see young people like that who are working so hard, making something of themselves, and are rooted in a community like this one, it really makes you proud.

Before I get started, there are a couple other folks that I want to introduce; they're are working for you day in, day out. First of all, your outstanding Governor, Jay Nixon, and his wife Georganne. The plant might not have been here had it not been for the great work of Jay. So that's important to know.

We've got my outstanding Secretary of Health and Human Services, former Governor of Kansas, Kathleen Sebelius is in the house. She basically just came because her son and his fiancee are here. [*Laughter*] But we're glad she's here.

One of my greatest friends and just a tough, smart, dedicated public servant, Senator Claire McCaskill is here. Give Claire a big round of applause. Your former mayor, preacher, can do everything, Emanuel Cleaver is in the house. Current mayor of Kansas City, Sly James is here. Mayor of Kansas City, Kansas, Mark Holland is here. And the mayor right here in Liberty, Lyndell Brenton and his lovely wife Roxann are here. Where are they? There they are.

Now, when I said I was flying into Kansas City to see an incredible success story in action, I did not think I was going to be talking about the Chiefs. [*Applause*] Before you get carried away, I just want to point out that the Bears are 2–0. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Boo!

The President. I'm just saying. [*Laughter*] And we're actually able to pass more than 10 yards. [*Laughter*] Just a little trash-talking.

We'll see how we're looking at the end of the season.

I want to give special thanks to Ford's CEO. This is one of our outstanding business leaders, has helped to lead Ford to be the number-one automaker in the United States of America, Alan Mulally is here. And we're very proud of him.

It doesn't matter if you've got an outstanding CEO if you don't have outstanding workers. And the President of Local 249, Jeff Wright, is here. Your launch manager, Todd Jaranowski, I really like because he is a Bears and a Sox fan. Come on, give Todd a big round of applause. And I very much appreciate him and some of the other folks showing me around this new stamping plant right here.

Now, you may not be aware of this, but you and I have a little history together. I may roll in a Cadillac these days—[*laughter*]—no, no, but it's not my car, it's—I'm just—I'm renting, just like my house. [*Laughter*] The lease runs out in about 3½ years. [*Laughter*] But before that, I was driving around in a 2008 Ford Escape. It came right off these assembly lines. Some of you might have been involved in building it. It was a great car. Problem is, I got Secret Service about a month after I bought the car, so I've only got 2,000 miles on it. [*Laughter*] It is in mint condition.

So I want to say thank you for building my car. But I also came here to talk about what's got to be the number-one priority in this country, and that is growing our economy, creating new jobs, and making sure that everyone who works hard in America has a chance to get ahead. It's our number-one priority.

Now, some of you remember, 5 years ago, a financial crisis hit Wall Street. It then turned into a devastating recession on Main Street, and it came close to being another Great Depression. By the time I took office, the economy was shrinking at a rate of 8 percent a year. Unprecedented. Our businesses were shedding 800,000 jobs a month. And you had this perfect storm, and millions of Americans lost their jobs, their homes, their savings they had been working a lifetime to get.

But what the recession also showed was the fact that for decades, middle class families had been working harder and harder just to get by, hadn't seen their incomes go up, hadn't seen their wages go up. Manufacturing was moving overseas. And so what built our middle class had been buckling, had been weakening.

And I think if you ask most Americans when the economic crisis hit, they might not date it to Lehman's Brothers collapsing. They'd talk to you about when they got a pink slip that they didn't expect or the bank took away their home or they didn't have health insurance or maybe they were told the plant was shutting down and the assembly line was going quiet. Those were tough times.

Five years ago, plants like this one were closing their doors. And the day I stepped into the Oval Office, the American auto industry, which is the heartbeat of American manufacturing—heartbeat of manufacturing—the auto industry was flatlining. Ford was standing on its own two feet, had made some smart decisions, but Alan will tell you, if GM and Chrysler had gone down, suppliers would go down; dealers would have gone down. And all of that would have had a profound impact on Ford.

I refused to let that happen. So we worked with labor, and we worked with management. Everybody had to make some sacrifices. Everybody put some skin in the game. We bet on the American worker. We bet on you. And today, that bet has paid off because the American auto industry has come roaring back.

The Big Three are all profitable, hiring new workers. You're not just building more cars, you're building better cars, better trucks. Look at what's going on right here at the plant. The new F–150 is built tougher than ever, more fuel efficient than ever. You've got trouble making them fast enough. You had to bring on a third shift of 900 workers just to keep up with demand.

And because Ford invested $1.1 billion in this plant, pretty soon, 1,100 more new workers will be joining you on these assembly lines in good, union jobs, building Ford Transit.

So more jobs building cars, that means more jobs for suppliers. It means more jobs for dis-

tributors. It means more jobs for the folks who own the restaurant here in town or the bar, depending on—[*laughter*]. It has an impact on your tax base. It has an impact on the teacher who teaches your kids, the first responder who keeps you safe. All those people are impacted by your success.

And that fundamental idea that when everybody is doing—when some of us are doing well, it's okay, but when everybody has got a stake, that's when things really start rolling, that's at the heart of every decision I've made as President. Because when the middle class does better, we all do better. Shareholders do better. CEOs do better. Workers do better. Everybody does better.

So in the depths of the crisis, we passed a Recovery Act to make sure that we put a floor below which this country couldn't fall. We put money in folks' pockets with tax breaks. We made sure that people were rebuilding roads and bridges, keeping things going, helping to keep teachers and firefighters and cops on the job. Today, 3½ years later, our businesses have added 7½ million new jobs—7½ million new jobs.

We helped responsible homeowners stay in their homes, won one of the biggest settlements in history on behalf of people who had wrongfully lost their homes because banks hadn't done things right. Today, our housing market is healing.

We took on a Tax Code that was too skewed towards the wealthy. We gave tax cuts, locked them in for 98 percent of families. We asked those in the top 2 percent to pay a little bit more. Today, middle class tax rates are near their alltime low. The deficits are falling at the fastest rate since World War II. That's what we did.

We invested in new American technologies to end our addiction to foreign oil. Today, we're generating more renewable energy than ever before, produce more natural gas than anybody in the world. We're about to produce more of our own oil than we buy from overseas for the first time in nearly 20 years.

And we took on a broken health care system. And in less than 2 weeks, millions of Americans who have been locked out of the insurance market are finally going to be able to get quality health care. Out of every 10 Americans who are currently uninsured, 6 out of those 10 are going to be able to get covered for less than a hundred dollars a month, less than your cell phone bill.

So we've been working, just like you've been working, over these last 4½ years. We've cleared away the rubble from the crisis. We've started to lay a new foundation for economic growth, a new foundation for prosperity. And everybody here, we all had to make some adjustments. I'm assuming some folks had to tighten their belts, get rid of some debt, focus on things that really matter, cut out some things you didn't need.

We've shown the world that the American people are tough, they're resilient. The only thing built tougher than Ford trucks are American workers, the American people. That's what we've shown.

All right, so that's the good news. But any working person, any middle class family, they'll tell you we're not yet where we need to be. The economy is growing, but it needs to grow faster. We're producing jobs, but we need to create more jobs and more good-paying jobs. We've got to make sure that we're rebuilding an economy that doesn't work from the top down, works from the middle out; that gives ladder of opportunity to folks who still don't have a job.

We've got to make sure that workers are sharing in growth and productivity. Right now, even though businesses are creating jobs, the top 1 percent took home 20 percent of the Nation's income last year. The average worker barely saw a raise.

Audience member. That's not fair.

The President. It ain't fair; it ain't right.

So in many ways, the trends that have taken hold over the past few years of a winner-take-all economy, a few folks at the top doing better and better and better, everybody else treading water or losing ground, that's not a model that we want. And it's been made worse by this recession.

So what I've been doing over the last couple months, I've been visiting towns like Liberty, traveling all across the country talking about what we need to do to reverse those trends, make sure, we've got a better bargain for middle class America: good jobs that pay good wages, an education that prepares our kids for a global economy, a home that is secure, affordable health care that is there when you get sick, a secure retirement even if you're not rich—all those things that make for a secure life so you can raise your kids and have confidence that they're going to do better than you did. That's what I'm focused on. That's what you're focused on. That's what Congress should be focused on.

Which brings me to the current situation. [*Laughter*] Let me talk a little bit about what's going on back in Washington. Right now Congress is in the middle of a budget debate. Now, there's nothing new about that. Every year Congress has got to pass a budget, and it's always a contentious process. But right now our recovery still needs to build more strength, so it's important that we get it right in Washington, because even though our success as a country is ultimately going to depend on great businesses like Ford, hard workers like you, Government has to do some things.

Congress has to pass a budget to make sure our education system works and prepares our kids and our workers for the global economy. If we're going to rebuild our roads, our bridges, our airports, our ports, Government's got to be involved in that. If we're going to have scientific research and development—I was looking at all these newfangled pieces of equipment here—some of the things that allowed the efficiencies of this plant originated in laboratories and scientists doing work on the Government's dime. That's how we always maintain our cutting edge. These are things that help us grow. These are help—things that help the private sector succeed.

So when people tell you somehow Government is irrelevant, no, everything we do has some connection to making sure that we, collectively, as a democracy, are making some smart investments in the future. That's how it's always been.

So what Congress is doing right now is important. Unfortunately, right now the debate that's going on in Congress is not meeting the test of helping middle class families. It's just, they're not focused on you. They're focused on politics. They're focused on trying to mess with me. [*Laughter*] They're not focused on you. [*Applause*] They're not focused on you.

So there are two deadlines coming up that Congress has to meet. And I want folks to pay attention to this. Congress has to meet two deadlines, and they're coming up pretty quick.

The first deadline: The most basic constitutional duty Congress has is to pass a budget. That's Congress 101. If they don't pass a budget by September 30—what's the date today? The 20th. All right, so if Congress doesn't pass a budget in 10 days, a week from Monday, the Government will shut down. A Government shutdown shuts down many services that the American people rely on.

This is not abstract. Hundreds of thousands of Americans will not be allowed to go to work. Our men and women in uniform, even those deployed overseas, won't get their paychecks on time. Small businesses, they won't get their loans processed. Now, none of that has to happen, as long as Congress passes a budget. Number one: passing a budget.

Number two, in the next few weeks, Congress must vote to allow the Department of the Treasury to pay America's bills. All right? Our Treasury Department, that's where we take in money and we pay it, right? Real simple. This is usually done with a simple, routine vote to raise what's called the debt ceiling. If you don't raise the debt ceiling, America can't pay its bills.

Since the 1950s, Congress has always passed it. Every President has signed it—Democrats, Republicans, Ronald Reagan—[*laughter*]—Lyndon Johnson—it doesn't matter. This is just a routine thing that you've got to do so that Treasury can pay the bills. If Congress doesn't pass this debt ceiling in the next few weeks, the United States will default on its obligations.

That's never happened in American history. Basically, America becomes a deadbeat.

If the world sees America not paying its bills, then they will not buy debt, Treasury bills, from the United States, or if they do, they'll do it at much higher interest rates. That means somebody wanting to buy an F–150 will have to pay much higher interest rates eventually, which means you will sell less cars. That's just one example of how profoundly destructive this could be. This is not some abstract thing.

And this is important: Raising the debt ceiling is not the same as approving more spending, any more than making your monthly payment adds to the total cost of your truck. You don't say, well, I'm not going to pay my bill, my note for my truck because I'm going to save money. No, you're not saving money. You already bought the truck, right? [*Laughter*] You have to pay the bills. You're not saving money. You might have decided at the front end not to buy the truck, but once you've bought the truck, you can't say you're saving money just by not paying the bills. Does that make sense?

So raising the debt ceiling, it doesn't cost a dime. It does not add a penny to our deficits. All it says is, you've got to pay for what Congress already said we're spending money on. If you don't do it, we could have another financial crisis.

And the fact is—I know a lot of people are concerned about deficits—our deficits are now coming down so quickly that by the end of this year, we will have cut them in more than half since I took office—cut deficits in half.

So I just want to break this down one more time. I go into a Ford dealership. I drive off with a new F–150. Unless I paid cash, I've still got to pay for it each month. I can't just say, you know, I'm not going to make my car payment this month. That's what Congress is threatening to do, just saying, I'm not going to pay the bills. There are consequences to that. The bill collector starts calling you, right? Your credit goes south, and you've got all kinds of problems. Same is true for a country.

So if we don't raise the debt ceiling, we're deadbeats. "If we fail to increase the debt limit, we would send our economy into a tailspin"—that's a quote, by the way, what I just said. You know who said it? The Republican Speaker of the House, John Boehner. The Republican Speaker has said if we don't pay our bills, we'll have an economic tailspin. So this is not just my opinion, this is everybody's opinion.

All right. Now, why haven't we already gotten it done if it's such a simple thing? Everybody is nodding; they're all, like, yes, why didn't we already get this done? Democrats and some reasonable Republicans in Congress are willing to raise the debt ceiling and pass a sensible budget. And I want to work with Democrats and Republicans to do just that. Claire McCaskill, she's ready to do it. Congressman Cleaver, he's ready to do it. And if we just pass the budget, raise the debt ceiling, we can get back to focusing on growing this economy and creating jobs, educating our kids—all the things we've got to do.

Unfortunately, there is a faction on the far right of the Republican Party right now—it's not everybody, but it's a pretty big faction—who have convinced their leadership to threaten a Government shutdown and potentially threaten to not raise the debt ceiling if they can't shut off the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare.

Now, think about this. They're not talking now about spending cuts. They're not talking about entitlement reform. They're not talking about any of that. Now they're talking about something that has nothing to do with the budget. Right? They're actually willing to plunge America into default if we can't defund the Affordable Care Act.

Now, let's put this in perspective. The Affordable Care Act has been into law for 3½ years. It passed both Houses of Congress. The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional. It was an issue in last year's elections. The guy who was running against me said he was going to repeal it. We won. The—[*applause*]. So the voters were pretty clear on this.

And then, Republicans in Congress, they've tried to repeal or sabotage this; more than 40 times they've had these repeal votes. Every time they fail. This law that is in place is

already providing people benefits. It's not holding back economic growth, it's helping millions of Americans, including some of you or your family members that you may not be aware of.

You can keep your kid on your own health insurance plan—somebody is raising their hand right here—until they're 26, because of the Affordable Care Act, which is one of the main reasons why the number of uninsured among young people has gone down over the last 3 years.

Seniors, they are benefiting right now from discounted prescription drug costs because of the law. If you've got health insurance, insurance companies can't impose lifetime limits on you. They can't use the fine print not to pay if you get sick. Insurance companies have to spend 80 percent of your premiums on your health care, not on administrative costs and CEO bonuses. Those are happening right now.

And health care costs have actually increased at the slowest rate in 50 years. So this is helping to reduce health care costs across the economy.

Finally, starting on October 1, it's going to help millions of more people. People who don't have health insurance right now, what it's going to do is, we're going to set up pools so that just like a worker at Ford can benefit from good insurance rates because you got a lot of workers in one big pool; now people who don't have the good fortune to work at a big company like Ford, they can also get a good deal.

Now, that's what—so that's what they're fighting for. They want to repeal all that, and they're saying, we're going to hold our breath, and if you don't repeal it—which, I've already said, I'm not going to do—we're going to send the economy into default. They will send our economy into a tailspin, just like Speaker Boehner said. They want to threaten default just to make sure that tens of millions of Americans continue not to have health care.

Defunding Affordable Health Care would rob 25 million Americans of the chance to get health care coverage. It would cut basic health care services for tens of millions of seniors on Medicare already. That's what House Republicans are fighting for.

And now they've gone beyond just holding Congress hostage, they're holding the whole country hostage. One Republican Senator called shutting down the Government over the Affordable Care Act "the dumbest idea I've ever heard." I agree with him. But that's the strategy they're pursuing. House of Representatives just voted on it today.

Now, I tell you what, Missouri: The American people have worked too hard for too long, digging out of a real crisis just to let politicians in Washington cause another crisis.

This is the United States of America. We're not some banana republic. This is not a deadbeat nation. We don't run out on our tab. We're the world's bedrock investment. The entire world looks to us to make sure the world economy is stable. We can't just not pay our bills. And even threatening something like that is the height of irresponsibility.

So what I've said is I will not negotiate over the full faith and credit of the United States. I am not going to allow anyone to harm this country's reputation—I'm not going to allow them to inflict economic pain on millions of our own people—just so they can make an ideological point.

But I need you to help. I need you to help tell Congress, pay our bills on time. Pass a budget on time. Stop governing from crisis to crisis. Put our focus back on where it should be: on you, the American people; on creating new jobs; on growing our economy; on restoring security for middle class families. That's what you deserve.

I mean, I don't know, it's like they do this every 6 months. [*Laughter*] Isn't it? I mean, I don't mind them disagreeing with me. They don't like the Affordable Care Act, they'd rather have people not have health insurance, I'm happy to have that debate with them. But you don't have to threaten to blow the whole thing up just because you don't get you way. [*Laughter*] Right?

I think about something that Jordan said. Her grandfather worked in this plant; uncle, stepmom worked in this plant. Now she and

her brother work in this plant, punching in as part of the next generation of American workers at a great, iconic American company. Our economy is coming back because of the resilience and determination of American workers like Jordan and her family.

And every day, all over this country, there are men and women just like Jordan, just like her brother, they wake up, maybe pack a lunch for their kids, kiss them goodbye, go to work, live up to their responsibilities, do their jobs, pay their bills.

Shouldn't you expect the same thing from people in Washington?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Shouldn't you expect the same thing from Members of Congress?

Just do your job. Don't be the other guy, be the guy who's doing your job. No obstruction. No games. No holding the economic hostage—the economy hostage if you don't get 100 percent of what you want.

Nobody gets 100 percent of what you want. You guys know that in your own lives, in your own families. I don't know how many people are married here, but you know you better learn not to expect getting 100 percent of what you want. Otherwise, you'll be divorced real quick. [*Laughter*] Especially you men, I'm telling you. [*Laughter*]

So you should expect the same thing, same common sense, out of Congress. You should expect some compassion. You should expect some compromise. You should expect the conviction of leaders who wake up and go to work every day, not to tear something down, but to build something better; not just for today, but for the world we want to leave our kids.

That's my conviction. That's my commitment to you. If we start thinking about you instead of politics and how you can get your base stirred up, then we're going to be able to get back to the point where this country is what we want it to be. If Washington will act with the same decency and common purpose that you and Americans all across the country do every single day, the economy will be stronger not just a year from now or 5 years from now or 10 years from now, but 20 and 30 and 50 years from now.

And as long as I have the privilege of serving you as your President, that's what I'm going to be focused on.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:53 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ford Motor Co. employee Jordan Wheeldon, who introduced the President; John Sebelius, son of Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, and his fiancee Allie Hoeme; Jeff Wright, president, UAW Local 249; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and Sen. Richard M. Burr.

The President's Weekly Address
September 21, 2013

Hi, everybody. It was 5 years ago this week that a financial crisis on Wall Street spread to Main Street and very nearly turned a recession into a depression. In a matter of months, millions of Americans were robbed of their jobs, their homes, their savings, after a decade in which they'd already been working harder and harder to just get by. It was a crisis from which we're still trying to recover. But thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we are steadily recovering.

Over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created 7½ million new jobs. Our housing market is healing. We've become less dependent on foreign oil. Health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. And in just over a week, millions of Americans without health care will be able to get covered for less than a hundred dollars a month.

So our economy is gaining traction. And we're finally tackling threats to middle class prosperity that Washington neglected for far too long. But as any middle class family listening right now knows, we've got a long way to go to get to where we need to be. And after 5 years spent digging out of crisis, the last thing

we need is for Washington to manufacture another one. But that's what will happen in the next few weeks if Congress doesn't meet two deadlines.

First, the most basic constitutional duty Congress has is passing a budget. But if it doesn't pass one before September 30—a week from Monday—the Government will shut down. And so will many services the American people expect. Military personnel, including those deployed overseas, won't get their paychecks on time. Federal loans for rural communities, small-business owners, and new home buyers will be frozen. Critical research into lifesaving discoveries and renewable energy will be halted. All of this will be prevented if Congress just passes a budget.

Second, Congress must authorize the Treasury to pay America's bills. This is done with a simple, usually routine, vote to raise what's called the debt ceiling. Since the 1950s, Congress has always passed it, and every President has signed it: Democrats and Republicans, including President Reagan. And if this Congress doesn't do it within the next few weeks, the United States will default on its obligations and put our entire economy at risk.

This is important. Raising the debt ceiling is not the same as approving more spending, it lets us pay for what Congress already spent. It doesn't cost a dime or add a penny to our deficit. In fact, right now our deficits are already falling at the fastest rate since the end of World War II. And by the end of this year, we'll have cut our deficits by more than half since I took office.

But reducing our deficits and debt isn't even what the current standoff in Congress seems to be all about. The fact is, Democrats and some reasonable Republicans are willing to raise the debt ceiling and pass a sensible budget, one that cuts spending on what we don't need so we can invest in what we do. And I want to work with those Democrats and Republicans on a better bargain for the middle class.

But there's also a faction on the far right of the Republican Party who've convinced their leadership to threaten a Government shutdown if they can't shut off the Affordable Care Act. Some are actually willing to plunge America into default if they can't defund the Affordable Care Act.

Think about that. They'd actually plunge this country back into recession, all to deny the basic security of health care to millions of Americans. That's not happening. And they know it's not happening.

The United States of America is not a deadbeat nation. We are a compassionate nation. We are the world's bedrock investment. And doing anything to threaten that is the height of irresponsibility. That's why I will not negotiate over the full faith and credit of the United States. I will not allow anyone to harm this country's reputation or threaten to inflict economic pain on millions of our own people just to make an ideological point.

So we're running out of time to fix this. But we could fix it tomorrow. Both Houses of Congress can take a simple vote to pay our bills on time, then work together to pass a budget on time.

Then we can declare an end to governing by crisis and govern responsibly, by putting our focus back where it should always be: on creating new jobs, growing our economy, and expanding opportunity not just for ourselves, but for future generations.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:55 p.m. on September 19 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on September 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 21.

Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Phoenix Awards Dinner

September 21, 2013

Hello, CBC! Thank you so much, everybody. Please, have a seat, have a seat. Michelle and I are happy to be here with such a good-looking crowd. Everybody's cleaning up nice. [*Laughter*]

Thank you to Chaka Fattah for not just the great introduction, but more importantly, your leadership, especially on the issues of brain research that have the potential to change so many lives. I want to thank Shuanise Washington and everybody at the CBC Foundation for doing so much to help all our young people achieve their God-given potential.

I see so many friends here tonight. And obviously, these last several weeks have been momentous in a lot of ways. Many of you I had an opportunity to see both hosting at the White House, but then at the actual anniversary, the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. And it was a little rainy that day, we didn't have a nice roof over our heads, but that wasn't enough to keep all of you away. It wasn't enough to keep me away. It wasn't enough to keep folks from all across the country from coming out to pay tribute to not only Dr. King, not only John Lewis, not only the well-known heroes of the civil rights movement, but to all the ordinary Americans who made it possible for so many of us to stand here today.

And as I looked out on that crowd, listening to Christine King Farris or Reverend Lowery and Congressman Lewis, it was impossible not to appreciate just how much progress we've made. It was impossible not to think of all the hearts that have been opened, all the laws that have been changed, all thanks to the quiet heroes who refused to give up or give in.

And as I said on that day, to dismiss the magnitude of that progress, to somehow suggest that little has changed, dishonors the courage and the sacrifice of all those who paid the price to march in those years. But what I also said—and I think there wasn't a speaker there that day or on Saturday in the other commemoration of the March who didn't make this point—we would also dishonor those heroes to suggest that the work of this Nation is somehow complete. And that's something that the CBC has always understood.

It wasn't until 1969—6 years after the March on Washington—that African Americans in Congress formed a caucus. And by then, the Civil Rights Act had been passed. The Voting Rights Act had been signed. The civil rights movement had been successful in many ways.

But the men and women who founded this caucus recognized what Dr. King understood: that equality is not just an abstraction—it's not just a formality—it has to go hand in hand with economic opportunity; that in order to address the enduring legacy of slavery and Jim Crow, we've got to make it easier for every American to earn their piece of the American Dream.

So fast forward to today, 50 years later. We all understand we have to be vigilant against any attempt to roll back our hard-won civil rights, whether that means tearing down barriers put up by those who seek to restrict the right to vote or making sure our criminal justice system works equally well for everybody, not just for some.

But at a time when Black unemployment remains twice as high as White unemployment, at a time when working Americans of all races have seen their incomes and wages stagnate even as corporate profits and the incomes of folks at the very top are soaring, we've got to pick up the torch of economic justice. We have to make this a country where anybody who works hard can earn their way into the middle class. And until we do, we will not let up, and we will not rest, no matter how much resistance we get. We will keep on pressing forward because it's good for America. It's the right thing to do.

We can't rest until every American knows the security of quality, affordable health care. In just over a week, thanks to the Affordable Care Act and the leadership shown by the

CBC and others in Congress—so many of you fought to pass this law—thanks to your efforts, 6 in 10 uninsured Americans will finally be able to get covered for less than a hundred dollars a month. Everybody is going to be able to get coverage; 6 in 10 will be able to get coverage for less than a hundred bucks a month. And by the way, the only reason it's 6 in 10 is because we've got some Governors who—[*laughter*]—haven't seen the light yet. If every Governor chose to join this project rather than to fight it just to score some political points, that number would be nearly 8 in 10.

So just think about that. Knowing you can offer your family the security of health care, that's priceless. And now you can do it for less than your cell phone bill. That's what change looks like.

We won't rest until every American has access to a good education. And we've got to make sure every child gets the best start in life. We want to give every 4-year-old in America access to quality preschool. There's no better investment. We should be making it right now. We can afford it. It's the right vision. It's the right time.

We should make college more affordable for every family. There's no better ticket to the middle class in this country. And we've already made college—including HBCUs—more affordable for millions of students and their families through tax credits and grants and student loans that are going further than ever before. But we've got more to do. And so I've been talking to colleges, telling them they need to do their part by bringing costs down. Because in a 21st-century economy, a higher education is not a luxury, it is an economic imperative, and everybody should be able to afford it, not just a few.

We can't rest until we offer new ladders of opportunity for anyone willing to climb them. When you think about America, when you think about the ideal of this country, a big part of it is the idea of upward mobility, the idea that if you work hard you can get ahead. Well, over the last 30 years, upward mobility in this country has slipped out of reach for too many people. And that's especially true in communities with large African American populations.

So we've got to do more to rebuild neighborhoods, help some of the hardest hit towns in America get back on their feet. We've got to raise the minimum wage. Nobody who works full time in the wealthiest nation on Earth should have to raise their children in poverty. Those are fights we need to win.

And finally, we can't rest until all of our children can go to school or walk down the street free from the fear that they will be struck down by a stray bullet. Just 2 days ago, in my hometown Chicago, 13 people were shot during a pickup basketball game, including a 3-year-old girl. Tomorrow night I'll be meeting and mourning with families in this city who now know the same unspeakable grief of families in Newtown and Aurora and Tucson and Chicago and New Orleans and all across the country, people whose loved ones were torn from them without headlines sometimes or public outcry, but it's happening every single day.

And we fought a good fight earlier this year, but we came up short. And that means we've got to get back up and go back at it. Because as long as there are those who fight to make it as easy as possible for dangerous people to get their hands on a gun, then we've got to work as hard as possible for the sake of our children. We've got to be ones who are willing to do more work to make it harder.

These are the tasks before us. These are the challenges we face. It's a tall order, all of it. I know the odds sometimes seem long. I was taking photos with the CBC folks—every one of them came up, said, oh, you hang in there—[*laughter*]—you hang in there, man. And I said, don't worry about me. [*Laughter*] I am still fired up because I still see the work that needs to be done. The work didn't go away.

And part of the reason that I don't get tired is because I've seen people who are in this audience and what you've done, the odds that you've overcome. And I know sometimes the climb seems steep at any given moment. Sometimes, it seems like the pettiness of our politics just is making things worse and worse.

You look at it right now: The other day, the House Republicans voted to cut $40 billion in nutritional aid for struggling families at the same time as some of the same folks who took that vote are receiving subsidies themselves. So farm subsidies for folks at the top are okay; help feeding your child is somehow not.

I know the CBC, led by outstanding chairwoman Marcia Fudge, fought hard to protect those programs that keep so many children from going hungry. And now we're seeing an extreme faction of these folks convincing their leadership to threaten to shut down the Government if we don't shut down the Affordable Care Act. Some of them are actually willing to see the United States default on its obligations and plunge this country back into a painful recession if they can't deny the basic security of health care to millions of Americans.

Now, I think this is an interesting thing to ponder: that your top agenda is making sure 20 million people don't have health insurance. And you'd be willing to shut down the Government and potentially default for the first time in United States history because it bothers you so much that we're actually going to make sure that everybody has affordable health care.

So let me say as clearly as I can: It is not going to happen. We have come too far. We've overcome far darker threats than those. We will not negotiate over whether or not America should keep its word and meet its obligations. We're not going to allow anyone to inflict economic pain on millions of our own people just to make an ideological point. And those folks are going to get some health care in this country; we've been waiting 50 years for it.

It's time for these folks to stop governing by crisis and start focusing on what really matters: creating new jobs, growing our economy, expanding opportunity for ourselves, looking after our children, doing something about the violence out there. As we've got all of these battles we have to face, we've got to remember what brought us here in the first place.

And as I was preparing my speech for the anniversary last month, I was doing some research, reading some stories about people who had come to the March 50 years ago, and I came across the story of a young man named Robert Avery. And Robert was 15 years old in 1963, so he and two friends decided to hitchhike from Gadsden, Alabama, to the March on Washington. And together, they traveled through some of the most segregated counties in America, sleeping in bus terminals, eating from vending machines, sometimes not eating. Sometimes, they walked. Sometimes, passerbys, Black and White, offered them rides, worried that they might not make it on their own.

Seven hundred miles later, the boys from Gadsden reached their destination. They marched with Dr. King. And it left a mark on them. And afterwards, Robert went back home to Alabama, and he's now spent the last three decades on the Gadsden City Council. And Robert Avery is here tonight.

And in some ways, Robert's story is duplicated all across this room. Dr. King talked about how we're inextricably linked. Robert Kennedy talked about how, if you toss a pebble in a pond, the ripples emanate from that center. And the same is true in our own lives, how those ripples of hope, we don't know sometimes how they're going to have an impact on folks later, but all those tiny ripples build up and end up changing the world.

So when I think about Robert Avery in the city council—and I'm sure he's got his struggles and frustrations just like a President of the United States has struggles and frustrations sometimes—but he's still coming to work every day. He's still working to bring about change every single day, just like our Attorney General comes to work every single day. Just like John Lewis every single day gets up. It doesn't matter whether he's in the majority or the minority, he's going to speak the truth. He's going to tell everybody what he believes.

And those stories should remind us what brought us here. Why did we seek a life of public service? Why did we get involved? It wasn't just to come to a gala. [*Laughter*] I mean, it's nice; everybody looks nice. [*Laughter*] But it wasn't to cash in after service. We may not have hitchhiked across the country, but everybody, at some point, we felt that same tug, that same voice in our heads telling us: Stand up,

speak out, try to make a difference, remember what you know to be true, what you know to be just, what you know to be fair, and be willing to fight for it, and don't be timid about it. And maybe sometimes, it's not going to work out right away, but if you stay at it again and again and again and you do not waver, eventually we make a difference. That's important.

Because while all our challenges are different from the ones faced by previous generations, we're going to need the same courage of a Robert Avery or a Bayard Rustin or a Joyce Ladner, all those marchers from 50 years ago; the same desire to get involved; the same courage to make our voices heard, to stand up for—whether it's quality health care or good education or our children's safety or equal opportunity.

We're going to have to keep marching. And I'm proud that I'll be—at least for the next 3½ years here in Washington and then a whole lot of years after that—I'm going to be marching with you.

God bless you, everybody. Thank you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:09 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to A. Shuanise Washington, president and chief executive officer, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.; W. Christine King Farris, sister of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Deonta Howard, a 3-year-old boy who was wounded in the September 19 shooting at Cornell Square Park in Chicago, IL; civil rights activist Joseph E. Lowery; and Joyce Ladner, senior fellow, Brookings Institution.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Victims of the Shooting at the Washington Navy Yard
September 22, 2013

Secretary Hagel, Secretary Mabus, Admirals Greenert and Hilarides, Mayor Gray, leaders from across this city and our Armed Forces, to all the outstanding first responders, and most of all, the families whose hearts have been broken: We cannot begin to comprehend your loss. We know that no words we offer today are equal to the magnitude, to the depths of that loss. But we come together as a grateful nation to honor your loved ones, to grieve with you, and to offer, as best we can, some solace and some comfort.

On the night that we lost Martin Luther King, Jr., to a gunman's bullet, Robert Kennedy stood before a stunned and angry crowd in Indianapolis, and he broke the terrible news. And in the anguish of that moment, he turned to the words of a ancient Greek poet, Aeschylus: "Even in our sleep, pain which we cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God." Pain which cannot forget, drop by drop upon the heart.

The tragedy and the pain that brings us here today is extraordinary. It is unique. The lives that were taken from us were unique. The memories their loved ones carry are unique, and they will carry them and endure long after the news cameras are gone. But part of what wears on as well is the sense that this has happened before. Part of what wears on us, what troubles us so deeply as we gather here today, is how this senseless violence that took place in the Navy Yard echoes other recent tragedies.

As President, I have now grieved with five American communities ripped apart by mass violence: Fort Hood, Tucson, Aurora, Sandy Hook, and now the Washington Navy Yard. And these mass shootings occur against a backdrop of daily tragedies, as an epidemic of gun violence tears apart communities across America, from the streets of Chicago to neighborhoods not far from here.

And so, once again, we remember our fellow Americans who were just going about their day, doing their jobs, doing what they loved, in this case, the unheralded work that keeps our

country strong and our Navy the finest fleet in the world—these patriots doing their work that they were so proud of—and who have now been taken away from us by unspeakable violence.

Once more, we come together to mourn the lives of beauty and to comfort the wonderful families who cherished them. Once more, we pay tribute to all who rushed towards the danger, who risked their lives so others might live, and who are in our prayers today, including Officer Scott Williams. Once more, our hearts are broken. Once more, we ask why. Once more, we seek strength and wisdom through God's grace.

You and your families, this Navy family, are still in the early hour of your grief. And I'm here today to say that there is nothing routine about this tragedy. There is nothing routine about your loss. Your loved ones will not be forgotten. They will endure in the hearts of the American people and in the hearts of the Navy that they helped to keep strong and the hearts of their coworkers and their friends and their neighbors.

"I want them to know how she lived," Jessica Gaarde said of her mother Kathy. "She is not a number or some statistic." None of these 12 fellow Americans are statistics. Today I want every American to see how these men and women lived. You may have never met them, but you know them. They're your neighbors, like Arthur Daniels, out there on the weekend, polishing his white Crown Victoria, and Kenneth Proctor, with his beloved yellow Mustang, who, if you asked, would fix your car too.

She was the friendly face at the store. Sylvia Frasier, with her unforgettable gold hair, who took a second job at Walmart because, she said, she just loved working with people. She was the diehard fan you sat next to at the game. Kathy Gaarde loved her hockey and her Caps, a season ticket holder for 25 years.

They were the volunteers who made your community better: Frank Kohler, giving dictionaries to every third-grader in his county; Marty Bodrog, leading the children's Bible study at church. They lived the American Dream, like Kisan Pandit, who left everything he knew in India for this land of opportunity and raised a wonderful family and dedicated himself to the United States Navy. They were proud veterans, like Gerald Read, who wore the Army uniform for more than 25 years, and Michael Arnold, who became one of the Navy's leading architects, of whom a colleague said, "Nobody knew those ships like him."

They were dedicated fathers, like Mike Ridgell, coaching his daughter's softball teams, joining Facebook just to keep up with his girls, one of whom said, "He was always the cool dad." They were loving mothers, like Mary Frances Knight, devoted to her daughters, and who had just recently watched with joy as her older daughter got married. They were doting grandparents, like John Johnson, always smiling, giving bear hugs to his 10 grandchildren and who would have welcomed his 11th grandchild this fall.

These are not statistics. They are the lives that have been taken from us. This is how far a single act of violence can ripple. A husband has lost his wife. Wives have lost their husbands. Sons and daughters have lost their moms and their dads. Little children have lost their grandparents. Hundreds in our communities have lost a neighbor, and thousands here have lost a friend.

As has been mentioned, for one family, the Daniels family, old wounds are ripped open again. Priscilla has lost Arthur, her husband of 30 years. Only a few years ago, as Mayor Gray indicated, another shooting took the life of their son, just 14 years old. "I can't believe this is happening again," Priscilla says.

So these families have endured a shattering tragedy. It ought to be a shock to us all as a nation and as a people. It ought to obsess us. It ought to lead to some sort of transformation. That's what happened in other countries when they experienced similar tragedies. In the United Kingdom, in Australia, when just a single mass shooting occurred in those countries, they understood that there was nothing ordinary about this kind of carnage. They endured great heartbreak, but they also mobilized, and they changed, and mass shootings became a great rarity.

And yet, here in the United States, after the round-of-clock coverage on cable news, after the heartbreaking interviews with families, after all the speeches and all the punditry and all the commentary, nothing happens. Alongside the anguish of these American families, alongside the accumulated outrage so many of us feel, sometimes, I fear there's a creeping resignation that these tragedies are just somehow the way it is, that this is somehow the new normal.

We can't accept this. As Americans bound in grief and love, we must insist here today, there is nothing normal about innocent men and women being gunned down where they work. There is nothing normal about our children being gunned down in their classrooms. There is nothing normal about children dying in our streets from stray bullets.

No other advanced nation endures this kind of violence, none. Here in America, the murder rate is three times what it is in other developed nations. The murder rate with guns is ten times what it is in other developed nations. And there is nothing inevitable about it. It comes about because of decisions we make or fail to make. And it falls upon us to make it different.

Sometimes, it takes an unexpected voice to break through, to help remind us what we know to be true. And we heard one of those voices last week. Dr. Janis Orlowski's team at MedStar Washington Hospital Center treated the wounded. And in the midst of one of her briefings, she spoke with heartbreaking honesty as somebody who sees, daily and nightly, the awful carnage of so much violence. We are a great country, she said, but "there's something wrong." All these shootings, all these victims, she said, "this is not America." "It is a challenge to all of us," she said, and "we have to work together to get rid of this."

And that's the wisdom we should be taking away from this tragedy and so many others: not accepting these shootings as inevitable, but asking what can we do to prevent them from happening again and again and again. I've said before, we cannot stop every act of senseless violence. We cannot know every evil that lurks in troubled minds. But if we can prevent even one tragedy like this, save even one life, spare other families what these families are going through, surely we've got an obligation to try.

It's true that each of the tragedies I've mentioned is different. And in this case, it's clear we need to do a better job of securing our military facilities, deciding who gets access to them. And as Commander in Chief, I have ordered a review of procedures up and down the chain, and I know that Secretary Hagel is moving aggressively on that. As a society, it's clear we've got to do a better job of ensuring that those who need mental health care actually get it and that in those efforts, we don't stigmatize those who need help. Those things are clear, and we've got to move to address them.

But we Americans are not an inherently more violent people than folks in other countries. We're not inherently more prone to mental health problems. The main difference that sets our Nation apart, what makes us so susceptible to so many mass shootings, is that we don't do enough, we don't take the basic, commonsense actions to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and dangerous people. What's different in America is, it's easy to get your hands on a gun. And a lot of us know this. But the politics are difficult, as we saw again this spring. And that's sometimes where the resignation comes from: the sense that our politics are frozen and that nothing will change.

Well, I cannot accept that. I do not accept that we cannot find a commonsense way to preserve our traditions, including our basic Second Amendment freedoms and the rights of law-abiding gun owners, while at the same time reducing the gun violence that unleashes so much mayhem on a regular basis. And it may not happen tomorrow, and it may not happen next week, it may not happen next month, but it will happen. Because it's the change that we need, and it's a change overwhelmingly supported by the majority of Americans.

By now, though, it should be clear that the change we need will not come from Washington, even when tragedy strikes Washington. Change will come the only way it ever has come, and that's from the American people. So

the question now is not whether, as Americans, we care in moments of tragedy. Clearly, we care. Our hearts are broken again. And we care so deeply about these families. But the question is, do we care enough?

Do we care enough to keep standing up for the country that we know is possible, even if it's hard and even if it's politically uncomfortable? Do we care enough to sustain the passion and the pressure to make our communities safer and our country safer? Do we care enough to do everything we can to spare other families the pain that is felt here today?

Our tears are not enough. Our words and our prayers are not enough. If we really want to honor these 12 men and women, if we really want to be a country where we can go to work and go to school and walk our streets free from senseless violence, without so many lives being stolen by a bullet from a gun, then we're going to have to change. We're going to have to change.

On Monday morning, these 12 men and women woke up like they did every day. They left home, and they headed off to work. And Gerald Read's wife Cathy said, "See you tonight for dinner." And John Johnson looked at his wife Judy and said what he always said whenever they parted: "Goodbye beautiful. I love you so much."

"Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

What Robert Kennedy understood, what Dr. King understood, what all our great leaders have always understood, is that wisdom does not come from tragedy alone or from some sense of resignation in the fallibility of man. Wisdom comes through the recognition that tragedies such as this are not inevitable and that we possess the ability to act and to change and to spare others the pain that drops upon our hearts. So in our grief, let us seek that grace. Let us find that wisdom. And in doing so, let us truly honor these 12 American patriots.

May God hold close the souls taken from us and grant them eternal peace. May He comfort and watch over these families. And may God grant us the strength and wisdom to keep safe our United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:18 p.m. at the Marine Barracks Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Vice Adm. William H. Hilarides, USN, commander, Naval Sea Systems Command; Mayor Vincent C. Gray of the District of Columbia; Scott Williams, officer, District of Columbia Police Department, who was wounded in the September 16 shooting; Lorton, VA, resident Mark Vandroff, colleague of shooting victim Capt. Michael Arnold; Heather Hunt and Megan and Maddi Ridgell, daughters of shooting victim Richard Ridgell of Westminster, MD; Nicole Marie Knight and Danielle Renee Knight, daughters of shooting victim Mary Frances DeLorenzo-Knight of Reston, VA; and Janis Orlowski, chief medical officer and chief operating officer, MedStar Washington Hospital Center. The related proclamation of September 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria in New York City
September 23, 2013

President Obama. Well, I appreciate very much the opportunity to meet once again with President Jonathan and his delegation. Obviously, Nigeria is one of the most powerful and fastest growing countries in the world. I think that's testified by the fact that President Jonathan is going to have the opportunity to ring the bell at the New York Stock Exchange. [*Laughter*] I think this signifies how important Nigeria is becoming in the global economy.

We have a very strong relationship between the United States and Nigeria. It's not just

based on Government-to-Government relations, but also people-to-people relations. And we have an outstanding Nigerian American community here in the United States that is making incredible contributions in every field every single day.

President Jonathan has committed to building on the democratic process that we've seen in Nigeria in the past. The last election that brought President Jonathan to power was a hallmark on the continent and in Nigeria in terms of free and fair elections. And I know that he is committed to making sure that the elections in 2015 move in that same fashion.

We are going to be able to have an opportunity to talk about the issues of energy and power. Nigeria is a major energy producer, but it's also an important energy consumer. And as many of you know who were on the trip that I took to Africa just recently, we are really focused on how we can help to bring electricity and power generation throughout Africa, not just in the big cities, but also in the rural areas. And Nigeria is a potential partner in that process.

We want to develop the human capital throughout the continent and in Nigeria. And that's why I'm excited about the Young African Leaders Initiative that is going to allow us to have young African leaders from across the continent, including Nigeria, here in the United States where they can interact with top leaders here in our universities, our businesses, and that will further strengthen the ties between our two countries.

And we're going to have an opportunity to discuss some significant challenges on the security front in Nigeria. In the northern regions of Nigeria, we've seen the emergence of one of the most vicious terrorist organizations in the world, the Boko Haram. It presents an extraordinary security challenge for the people of Nigeria, and we want to be cooperative in that process of building capacity inside Nigeria to deal with that terrorist threat, but doing so in a way that is consistent with human rights. Because we strongly believe that the best way to undermine the agenda of those who would do violence is to make sure that governments are responsive to the needs of people and following rule of law.

On that topic, let me just make one last point. I've had the opportunity to speak with President Kenyatta directly about the terrible tragedy that's happened in Nairobi, and we are providing all the cooperation that we can as we deal with a situation that has captivated the world.

I want to express personally my condolences to not only President Kenyatta, who lost some family members in the attack, but to the Kenyan people. We stand with them against this terrible outrage that's occurred. We will provide them with whatever law enforcement support that is necessary. And we are confident that Kenya, which has been a pillar of stability in Eastern Africa, will rebuild.

But this, I think, underscores the degree to which all of us as an international community have to stand against the kind of senseless violence that these kinds of groups represent. And the United States will continue to work with the entire continent of Africa and around the world to make sure that we are dismantling these networks of destruction.

With that, Mr. President.

[*At this point, President Jonathan made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Lyndon B. Johnson Suite of the Waldorf Astoria New York hotel.

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Civil Society in New York City
September 23, 2013

The President. Thank you very much, everybody, for joining us here today. And I want to offer a few brief remarks in terms of the purpose of this meeting. We've got a wonderful

panel here and some extraordinary representatives: both heads of states, members of civil society, people who have been working on these issues for a very long time.

The focus today is on civil society, because it's my strong belief that the strength and success of all countries and all regions depends in part on protecting and supporting civil society.

I want to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson. I want to thank my good friend President Elbegdorj of Mongolia, representing the Community of Democracies. I want to thank Alejandro Gonzalez Arreola of Mexico, representing civil society members of the Open Government Partnership. And I want to thank all of you for joining us here today.

Human progress has always been propelled at some level by what happens in civil society: citizens coming together to insist that a better life is possible, pushing their leaders to protect the rights and the dignities of all people. And that's why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association." This is not a Western value, this is a universal right.

Civil society led the fight to end apartheid in South Africa. It led the fight to bring freedom to Eastern Europe. It helped to heal places divided by conflict, whether in Cambodia or Colombia. Here in the United States, civil society has been the catalyst for virtually every major advance that we've made, from the abolition of slavery to women's rights, civil rights, the protections of workers, and the protections of the environment.

And yet, still today, in every region, we see that the fight goes on. We have citizens who are leading the charge to expand opportunity, to correct injustices, to shape their countries' futures. And it's my belief that strong nations recognize the values of active citizens. They support and empower their citizens rather than stand in their way, even when it's inconvenient—or perhaps especially when it's inconvenient—for government leaders.

Strong civil societies help uphold human rights. They promote good governance by making governments more effective and holding leaders like me to account. And they're critical to economic development, because in our global economy, trade and investment flows to countries that give citizens the freedom to create and develop new ideas and that are protected by rule of law.

So many countries, including those in this room, are working in partnership with civil societies. From Mongolia to Mexico, Tunisia, Tanzania, governments and citizens are working together to improve the rule of law, reduce wasteful spending, organize public campaigns to strengthen health and education.

Unfortunately, though, what we're also seeing is a growing number of countries that are passing laws designed specifically to stifle civil society. They are forcing groups to register with governments, eroding human rights protections, restricting NGOs from accessing foreign funding, cracking down on communications technologies that connect civil society groups around the globe. In more extreme cases, activists and journalists have been arrested on false charges, and some have been killed. We're also seeing new and fragile democracies cracking down on civil society, which I believe sets them back and sends a dangerous signal to other countries.

So, in recent years, the international community has stepped up our support. Two years ago, some of you recall, we came together to launch the Open Government Partnership to promote transparent, effective, and accountable institutions in partnership with civil society. Sixty countries and a broad coalition of civil society and private sector partners have joined. The Community of Democracies is working to take aim at restrictive laws. The Human Rights Council established the first Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Peaceful Assembly and Association. And several Governments and foundations, including many in this room, contribute to a lifeline fund for emergency aid to civil society groups under threat.

So I've made a point to meet with civil society worldwide. Virtually, every foreign trip that I take, I carve out time to meet with citizens who are active on a whole range of issues. And

in part, it's to lift up the good work they're doing and affirm that the United States stands behind their efforts. Nevertheless, we have to recognize that the crackdown continues, and we urgently need to do more to increase global attention and spur global action. So that's why we're here.

I'm challenging all of us to use the next 12 months to make progress in three key areas. First, we have to identify specific steps that countries, including the United States, can take to make it easier for civil society to do its job and to encourage governments to embrace civil society groups as partners.

Number two, we need to do more to stand against restrictions on civil society and better coordinate our diplomacy when the government tries to stifle civil society. I think it's critical that the international community should be working together to ensure that there are actual consequences.

And number three, we have to find new and better ways to support civil society in difficult circumstances. Governments that restrict civil society are sharing their worst practices. We've got to make sure that we're sharing our best practices and doing all we can to help civil society succeed.

Many of you know that I didn't begin my career in elective politics. I began working in low-income communities in Chicago. I was elected as President through the active participation of citizens. And so I know what active citizens can do. And the United States, as one of, I think, our most precious gifts, has been trying to set an example of how active citizens can make a country stronger, that makes us deeply committed to protecting the rights of all people who are contributing to our Nation's progress—or their nation's progress.

And as other countries crack down, I believe we've got to step up together: those of us in this room, but a whole lot of people outside this room as well.

So I'm going to be looking for specific actions, specific follow-up steps. And with that, what I'd like to do is turn it over to the Deputy Secretary-General for his remarks, and then we'll make sure that this outstanding panel all has an opportunity to make their contributions.

[*At this point, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson of the United Nations made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you very much. Next, I'd like to hear from Mr. Arreola.

[*Alejandro Gonzalez Arreola, cofounder and director general of the Mexican civil society organization GESOC, made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you very much, Alejandro. Next, I would like to turn to President Elbegdorj, who has done outstanding work in his own country of Mongolia, but is also representing the Community of Democracies. Mr. President.

[*President Tsakhia Elbegdorj of Mongolia made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the outstanding statement. Next, we'd ask the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Assembly and Association, Maina Kiai, to deliver his brief remarks. And obviously, Maina has his thoughts, as well, in his home country that has gone through just a terrible terrorist attack over the last several days. And I want to, once again, express publicly my sympathy for what's happening there and pledging continued U.S. support in response.

[*United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association Maina Kiai made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you, Maina. Next, I'd ask Khin Lay, a Burmese civil society activist, to speak. And obviously, there's enormous significance hearing from her given the transformation that's beginning to take place in Burma—in Myanmar. It is not something that is complete yet, but I think it testifies to the pow-

er of civil society to bring about change, even in some of the most difficult situations. So please, Khin.

[*Khin Lay, founder of the Burmese civil society organization Triangle Women Support Group, made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you. We have enough time to take some brief comments or questions from some of the civil society organizations that are represented here today. There are two in particular that I want to call on: First of all, I'd like to hear from Otto Saki from Zimbabwe, so that we can get a sense of the work that's being done there. And then I'd like an opportunity to take a comment from Darren Walker of the Ford Foundation, because the philanthropic community can play a very important role in supporting civil society groups, and I know that Ford is looking at ways in which it can make an even greater commitment in the future. So, Otto, let's start with you.

[*Otto Saki, former acting director of the Zimbabwean civil society organization Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. The—let me just comment on a couple of points that you just made.

Number one, it is true that many countries that are trying to restrict civil society may pass laws and then they'll argue that they're observing the law and civil society groups are not observing the law. But this is why I think developing institutional structures that constrain what government can do is so important.

And you mentioned the trip that I took to Africa. I have specifically met with the chief justices from a number of countries, because an independent judiciary that is properly functioning and properly financed can serve as an important protector of civil society. Unfortunately, what we see in a lot of countries is, is that the resources for a judiciary, for the proper application of the laws are often significantly compromised.

And one of the things that I think all of us as heads of state can do in supporting these efforts is make sure that when we look at our aid programs, when we look at our diplomatic efforts, that we are not ignoring some of those institutional bodies that offer some measures of relief or potential protection for the civil society's organizations that are taking place. It also means, though, civil society activists have to think strategically about what is it that they're promoting. And if you have an environmental organization, a human rights organization, an economic cooperative, on the surface, their issues may be different, but they'll all have an interest potentially in fighting a registration law in the country that makes it more difficult for them to operate.

And I think creating coalitions inside those countries that focus on laws that, across the board, impact civil society rather than focusing on just a few set of narrow issues, I think can make a difference as well. But I very much appreciate your comments.

Now, one of the biggest challenges that we're seeing when it comes to civil society is the issue of financial support. Historically, we've seen support, including from institutions based here in the United States. That then becomes an excuse for governments who say, well, civil society is being funded by outsiders and is in some fashion undermining our sovereignty. And this is where I think philanthropic organizations can make an enormous impact.

And so I would be interested in hearing, Darren, the kinds of steps that you at Ford and some of the other philanthropies not just here in the United States, but around the world, may be looking at.

Ford Foundation President Darren Walker. Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you for convening us. And thank you for your passion and your authentic leadership.

[*Mr. Walker's microphone malfunctioned.*]

The President. Let's get that mike working. Do we have another one?

[*Mr. Walker was given a new microphone.*]

The President. That was not an instance of censorship——

Mr. Walker. Thank you. Thank you.

President Obama. ——simply a technical difficulty.

Mr. Walker. Thank you very much.

[*Mr. Walker made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you. Let's close out by hearing from Douglas Rutzen, who is the chief executive officer of the Center for Non-for-Profit Law, who's doing some outstanding work. Doug.

[*Douglas Rutzen, president and chief executive officer of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, made remarks, and no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you. Well, first of all, I want to thank all who spoke for their outstanding contributions. Let me just make a few closing remarks.

Number one, the fact that I'm here, I think, indicates the degree to which the United States takes this very seriously. The work is hard, and sometimes, you take a step back for every two steps forward. Certainly, that was the history here in the United States; Dr. King's been mentioned several times.

The restrictive laws that were put in place, the challenges to funding from outside groups, the threats and the intimidation and the violence and the jailings—these were all things that the early civil rights movement here in the United States went through. And yet, because justice was on their side, they ultimately prevailed.

And I have confidence that, in the words of Dr. King, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." And it's a matter of us staying with it. And the United States, as a matter of government policy, stands behind civil society organizations.

Now, those of us who head up governments in this room, I think we have to recognize that when we're interacting with our colleagues from other countries that may not have as much respect for civil society as we do, that we have a lot of business to transact and there are security issues and there are trade issues and there are energy issues. And I recently spoke with some civil society groups in Russia, and I was very honest with them. I said, as President of the United States, I've got to take all those issues into account. I can't only talk about civil society and human rights issues in a bilateral meeting; I'm going to have to talk about a whole range of things.

But what is also true is, me making a statement that this is important, bringing it up in a bilateral meeting makes a difference. It gives other countries pause. It makes them reflect on whether or not they are doing what they should be doing. And so I would just urge those of us who have that capacity to make sure that this is on our agenda. It's not the only agenda, but it is an important aspect of the agenda, and us bringing it up does make a difference.

I would also say that it's important, as has already been noted, that we don't just issue strong pronouncements, but we also have action behind it. And a number of specific things have already been mentioned: making sure that we're sharing best practices effectively. What Doug talked about in terms of gathering model laws, essentially, that then could empower Otto and others who are in the field to say, this is what would help us in terms of providing protections. That's something very specific that we can do.

Making sure that we find ways to adequately fund civil society groups in ways that are less easily characterized as being tools of the United States or Western powers, I think that's an area where philanthropy can make a big difference. And I've talked to my team about, are there ways in which we could internationalize funding for these efforts so that they're less easily caricatured?

I also think it's going to be important for us to continue to shine the spotlight on the issue and publicize these issues in more effective ways, particularly at a time when much of the

efforts that we've heard about have to do with restricting access to the Internet: Are there ways that we can use the Internet more effectively to open up space rather than to see that space closed?

So the instructions to my team and my Government are that we are going to put our full support behind these efforts. What we want to see is concrete outcomes, not just windowdressing. We will continue to try to mobilize as many countries as possible to get involved in this process. And we do so because, ultimately, we believe that governments that are representative and accountable to their people are going to be more peaceful, they're going to be more prosperous, they're going to be better partners for us. It is not just charity, it is something that we believe is in our national interests and our security interests.

We've all observed, I think, some of the convulsions that have been taking place in the Arab Spring, and I think it's a reminder that things are not always a smooth path. But I want to affirm that over the long run, we will all be better off if that small shopkeeper or that small farmer or that young student or that disabled person or that gay or lesbian person or that ethnic minority or that religious minority, if they have a voice and their dignity is respected. That's what will preserve our dignity, and that's what will ensure our security over the long term.

That's why we're invested in this, that's why I'm very excited about all the work that we're doing, and that's why I want to say thank you to all of you who participated. Okay?

All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:02 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom of the New York Hilton Midtown hotel.

Joint Statement on the Promotion and Protection of Civil Society
September 23, 2013

We, the governments of the United States, Australia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Ireland, Japan, Libya, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom, taking note of the important work of the Community of Democracies, the Open Government Partnership, and the Lifeline Fund, met on September 23 along with representatives of civil society, the philanthropic community, the private sector, and the United Nations on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Our purpose was to reinforce the central role of civil society in working with governments to address common challenges and to coordinate action to promote and protect civil society in the face of ongoing assault around the world. We affirmed that the strength and vibrancy of nations depend on an active civil society and robust engagement between governments and civil society to advance shared goals of peace, prosperity, and the well-being of all people. We noted our deep concern that many governments are restricting civil society and the rights of freedom of association and expression, both online and offline.

To combat this alarming trend, our governments committed to work together to respond to growing restrictions on civil society that undermine its ability to perform its crucial role. We will ensure effective coordination of the multiple efforts already underway toward this end, including through the U.N. system, the Community of Democracies, the Open Government Partnership, and Lifeline, and commit to strengthen our support for these existing mechanisms. We will enhance our support for the work of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. We will lead by example to promote laws, policy decisions, and practices that foster a positive space for civil society in accordance with international law, and oppose legislation and administrative measures that impede efforts of civil society. We will undertake joint diplomatic action whenever necessary to

support civil society in countries where it is under threat, and to defend the fundamental freedoms of association and peaceful assembly.

We will also work to develop new and innovative ways of providing technical, financial, and logistical support to promote and protect the right of citizens and civil society to freely associate, meaningfully engage with government, and constructively participate in processes to improve the well-being of their countries. Throughout all of these efforts, our nations will continue to engage with representatives of civil society to help us understand and respond to the challenges they confront.

We commit to gather again at the opening of the 69th United Nations General Assembly to review our progress toward these objectives. We will work in concert over the coming year to ensure a robust, effective international response to the proliferation of restrictions being placed on civil society. We call on representatives of civil society, the philanthropic community, the private sector, and other governments to partner with us in supporting and defending civil society.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City
September 24, 2013

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen: Each year, we come together to reaffirm the founding vision of this institution. For most of recorded history, individual aspirations were subject to the whims of tyrants and empires. Divisions of race and religion and tribe were settled through the sword and the clash of armies. The idea that nations and peoples could come together in peace to solve their disputes and advance a common prosperity seemed unimaginable.

It took the awful carnage of two world wars to shift our thinking. The leaders who built the United Nations were not naive; they did not think this body could eradicate all wars. But in the wake of millions dead and continents in rubble, and with the development of nuclear weapons that could annihilate a planet, they understood that humanity could not survive the course it was on. And so they gave us this institution, believing that it could allow us to resolve conflicts, enforce rules of behavior, and build habits of cooperation that would grow stronger over time.

Now, for decades, the United Nations has in fact made a difference, from helping to eradicate disease to educating children, to brokering peace. But like every generation of leaders, we face new and profound challenges, and this body continues to be tested. The question is whether we possess the wisdom and the courage, as nation-states and members of an international community, to squarely meet those challenges, whether the United Nations can meet the tests of our time.

For much of my tenure as President, some of our most urgent challenges have revolved around an increasingly integrated global economy and our efforts to recover from the worst economic crisis of our lifetime. Now, 5 years after the global economy collapsed and thanks to coordinated efforts by the countries here today, jobs are being created, global financial systems have stabilized, and people are once again being lifted out of poverty. But this progress is fragile and unequal, and we still have work to do together to assure that our citizens can access the opportunities that they need to thrive in the 21st century.

Together, we've also worked to end a decade of war. Five years ago, nearly 180,000 Americans were serving in harm's way, and the war in Iraq was the dominant issue in our relationship with the rest of the world. Today, all of our troops have left Iraq. Next year, an international coalition will end its war in Afghanistan, having achieved its mission of dismantling the core of Al Qaida that attacked us on 9/11.

For the United States, these new circumstances have also meant shifting away from a

perpetual war footing. Beyond bringing our troops home, we have limited the use of drones so they target only those who pose a continuing, imminent threat to the United States where capture is not feasible and there is a near certainty of no civilian casualties. We're transferring detainees to other countries and trying terrorists in courts of law, while working diligently to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. And just as we reviewed how we deploy our extraordinary military capabilities in a way that lives up to our ideals, we've begun to review the way that we gather intelligence so that we properly balance the legitimate security concerns of our citizens and allies with the privacy concerns that all people share.

As a result of this work and cooperation with allies and partners, the world is more stable than it was 5 years ago. But even a glance at today's headlines indicates that dangers remain. In Kenya, we've seen terrorists target innocent civilians in a crowded shopping mall, and our hearts go out to the families of those who have been affected. In Pakistan, nearly 100 people were recently killed by suicide bombers outside a church. In Iraq, killings and car bombs continue to be a terrible part of life. And meanwhile, Al Qaida has splintered into regional networks and militias, which doesn't give them the capacity at this point to carry out attacks like 9/11, but does pose serious threats to governments and diplomats, businesses and civilians, all across the globe.

Just as significantly, the convulsions in the Middle East and North Africa have laid bare deep divisions within societies, as an old order is upended and people grapple with what comes next. Peaceful movements have too often been answered by violence, from those resisting change and from extremists trying to hijack change. Sectarian conflict has reemerged. And the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction continues to cast a shadow over the pursuit of peace.

Nowhere have we seen these trends converge more powerfully than in Syria. There, peaceful protests against an authoritarian regime were met with repression and slaughter. In the face of such carnage, many retreated to their sectarian identity—Alawite and Sunni, Christian and Kurd—and the situation spiraled into civil war.

The international community recognized the stakes early on, but our response has not matched the scale of the challenge. Aid cannot keep pace with the suffering of the wounded and displaced. A peace process is stillborn. America and others have worked to bolster the moderate opposition, but extremist groups have still taken root to exploit the crisis. Asad's traditional allies have propped him up, citing principles of sovereignty to shield his regime. And on August 21, the regime used chemical weapons in an attack that killed more than 1,000 people, including hundreds of children.

Now, the crisis in Syria, and the destabilization of the region, goes to the heart of broader challenges that the international community must now confront. How should we respond to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa—conflicts between countries, but also conflicts within them? How do we address the choice of standing callously by while children are subjected to nerve gas or embroiling ourselves in someone else's civil war? What's the role of force in resolving disputes that threaten the stability of the region and undermine all basic standards of civilized conduct? And what's the role of the United Nations and international law in meeting cries for justice?

Today I want to outline where the United States of America stands on these issues. With respect to Syria, we believe that as a starting point, the international community must enforce the ban on chemical weapons. When I stated my willingness to order a limited strike against the Asad regime in response to the brazen use of chemical weapons, I did not do so lightly. I did so because I believe it is in the security interest of the United States and in the interests of the world to meaningfully enforce a prohibition whose origins are older than the United Nations itself. The ban against the use of chemical weapons, even in war, has been agreed to by 98 percent of humanity. It is strengthened by the searing memories of soldiers suffocating in the trenches, Jews

slaughtered in gas chambers, Iranians poisoned in the many tens of thousands.

The evidence is overwhelming that the Asad regime used such weapons on August 21. U.N. inspectors gave a clear accounting that advanced rockets fired large quantities of sarin gas at civilians. These rockets were fired from a regime-controlled neighborhood and landed in opposition neighborhoods. It's an insult to human reason—and to the legitimacy of this institution—to suggest that anyone other than the regime carried out this attack.

Now, I know that in the immediate aftermath of the attack, there were those who questioned the legitimacy of even a limited strike in the absence of a clear mandate from the Security Council. But without a credible military threat, the Security Council had demonstrated no inclination to act at all. However, as I've discussed with President Putin for over a year, most recently in St. Petersburg, my preference has always been a diplomatic resolution to this issue. And in the past several weeks, the United States, Russia, and our allies have reached an agreement to place Syria's chemical weapons under international control and then to destroy them.

The Syrian Government took a first step by giving an accounting of its stockpiles. Now there must be a strong Security Council resolution to verify that the Asad regime is keeping its commitments, and there must be consequences if they fail to do so. If we cannot agree even on this, then it will show that the United Nations is incapable of enforcing the most basic of international laws. On the other hand, if we succeed, it will send a powerful message that the use of chemical weapons has no place in the 21st century and that this body means what it says.

Now, agreement on chemical weapons should energize a larger diplomatic effort to reach a political settlement within Syria. I do not believe that military action—by those within Syria, or by external powers—can achieve a lasting peace. Nor do I believe that America or any nation should determine who will lead Syria; that is for the Syrian people to decide. Nevertheless, a leader who slaughtered his citizens and gassed children to death cannot regain the legitimacy to lead a badly fractured country. The notion that Syria can somehow return to a prewar status quo is a fantasy.

So it's time for Russia and Iran to realize that insisting on Asad's rule will lead directly to the outcome that they fear: an increasingly violent space for extremists to operate. In turn, those of us who continue to support the moderate opposition must persuade them that the Syrian people cannot afford a collapse of state institutions and that a political settlement cannot be reached without addressing the legitimate fears and concerns of Alawites and other minorities.

We are committed to working this political track. And as we pursue a settlement, let's remember, this is not a zero-sum endeavor. We're no longer in a cold war. There's no great game to be won, nor does America have any interest in Syria beyond the well-being of its people, the stability of its neighbors, the elimination of chemical weapons, and ensuring that it does not become a safe haven for terrorists.

I welcome the influence of all nations that can help bring about a peaceful resolution of Syria's civil war. And as we move the Geneva process forward, I urge all nations here to step up to meet humanitarian needs in Syria and surrounding countries. America has committed over a billion dollars to this effort, and today I can announce that we will be providing an additional $340 million. No aid can take the place of a political resolution that gives the Syrian people the chance to rebuild their country, but it can help desperate people to survive.

What broader conclusions can be drawn from America's policy towards Syria? I know there are those who have been frustrated by our unwillingness to use our military might to depose Asad and believe that a failure to do so indicates a weakening of American resolve in the region. Others have suggested that my willingness to direct even limited military strikes to deter the further use of chemical weapons shows we've learned nothing from Iraq and that America continues to seek control over the Middle East for our own purposes. In this way, the situation in Syria mirrors a contradiction

that has persisted in the region for decades: the United States is chastised for meddling in the region, accused of having a hand in all manner of conspiracy; at the same time, the United States is blamed for failing to do enough to solve the region's problems and for showing indifference toward suffering Muslim populations.

I realize some of this is inevitable, given America's role in the world. But these contradictory attitudes have a practical impact on the American people's support for our involvement in the region and allow leaders in the region—as well as the international community sometimes—to avoid addressing difficult problems themselves.

So let me take this opportunity to outline what has been U.S. policy towards the Middle East and North Africa and what will be my policy during the remainder of my Presidency.

The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region. We will confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf war.

We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing our own dependence on imported oil, the world still depends on the region's energy supply, and a severe disruption could destabilize the entire global economy.

We will dismantle terrorist networks that threaten our people. Wherever possible, we will build the capacity of our partners, respect the sovereignty of nations, and work to address the root causes of terror. But when it's necessary to defend the United States against terrorist attack, we will take direct action.

And finally, we will not tolerate the development or use of weapons of mass destruction. Just as we consider the use of chemical weapons in Syria to be a threat to our own national security, we reject the development of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region and undermine the global nonproliferation regime.

Now, to say that these are America's core interests is not to say that they are our only interests. We deeply believe it is in our interests to see a Middle East and North Africa that is peaceful and prosperous, and we'll continue to promote democracy and human rights and open markets, because we believe these practices achieve peace and prosperity. But I also believe that we can rarely achieve these objectives through unilateral American action, particularly through military action. Iraq shows us that democracy cannot simply be imposed by force. Rather, these objectives are best achieved when we partner with the international community and with the countries and peoples of the region.

So what does this mean going forward? In the near term, America's diplomatic efforts will focus on two particular issues: Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the Arab-Israeli conflict. While these issues are not the cause of all the region's problems, they have been a major source of instability for far too long, and resolving them can help serve as a foundation for a broader peace.

The United States and Iran have been isolated from one another since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This mistrust has deep roots. Iranians have long complained of a history of U.S. interference in their affairs and of America's role in overthrowing an Iranian Government during the cold war. On the other hand, Americans see an Iranian Government that has declared the United States an enemy and directly—or through proxies—taken American hostages, killed U.S. troops and civilians, and threatened our ally Israel with destruction.

I don't believe this difficult history can be overcome overnight; the suspicions run too deep. But I do believe that if we can resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear program, that can serve as a major step down a long road towards a different relationship, one based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

Now, since I took office, I've made it clear in letters to the Supreme Leader in Iran and more recently to President Rouhani that America prefers to resolve our concerns over Iran's nuclear program peacefully, although we are determined to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. We are not seeking

regime change, and we respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy. Instead, we insist that the Iranian Government meet its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Now, meanwhile, the Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Rouhani has just recently reiterated that the Islamic Republic will never develop a nuclear weapon.

So these statements made by our respective governments should offer the basis for a meaningful agreement. We should be able to achieve a resolution that respects the rights of the Iranian people, while giving the world confidence that the Iranian program is peaceful. But to succeed, conciliatory words will have to be matched by actions that are transparent and verifiable. After all, it's the Iranian Government's choices that have led to the comprehensive sanctions that are currently in place. And this not—this is not simply an issue between the United States and Iran. The world has seen Iran evade its responsibilities in the past and has an abiding interest in making sure that Iran meets its obligations in the future.

But I want to be clear: We are encouraged that President Rouhani received from the Iranian people a mandate to pursue a more moderate course. And given President Rouhani's stated commitment to reach an agreement, I am directing John Kerry to pursue this effort with the Iranian Government, in close cooperation with the European Union, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China.

The roadblocks may prove to be too great, but I firmly believe the diplomatic path must be tested. For while the status quo will only deepen Iran's isolation, Iran's genuine commitment to go down a different path will be good for the region and the world and will help the Iranian people meet their extraordinary potential: in commerce and culture, in science and education.

We are also determined to resolve a conflict that goes back even further than our differences with Iran, and that is the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. I've made it clear that the United States will never compromise our commitment to Israel's security, nor our support for its existence as a Jewish state. Earlier this year, in Jerusalem, I was inspired by young Israelis who stood up for the belief that peace was necessary, just, and possible. And I believe there is a growing recognition within Israel that the occupation of the West Bank is tearing at the democratic fabric of the Jewish state. But the children of Israel have the right to live in a world where the nations assembled in this body fully recognize their country and where we unequivocally reject those who fire rockets at their homes or incite others to hate them.

Likewise, the United States remains committed to the belief that the Palestinian people have a right to live with security and dignity in their own sovereign state. On the same trip, I had the opportunity to meet with young Palestinians in Ramallah whose ambition and incredible potential are matched by the pain they feel in having no firm place in the community of nations. They are understandably cynical that real progress will ever be made, and they're frustrated by their families enduring the daily indignity of occupation. But they, too, recognize that two states is the only real path to peace, because just as the Palestinian people must not be displaced, the State of Israel is here to stay.

So the time is now ripe for the entire international community to get behind the pursuit of peace. Already, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have demonstrated a willingness to take significant political risks. President Abbas has put aside efforts to short-cut the pursuit of peace and come to the negotiating table. Prime Minister Netanyahu has released Palestinian prisoners and reaffirmed his commitment to a Palestinian state. Current talks are focused on final status issues of borders and security, refugees and Jerusalem.

So now the rest of us must be willing to take risks as well. Friends of Israel, including the United States, must recognize that Israel's security as a Jewish and democratic state depend on the realization of a Palestinian state, and we should say so clearly. Arab States, and those who have supported the Palestinians, must rec-

ognize that stability will only be served through a two-state solution and a secure Israel.

All of us must recognize that peace will be a powerful tool to defeat extremists throughout the region and embolden those who are prepared to build a better future. And moreover, ties of trade and commerce between Israelis and Arabs could be an engine of growth and opportunity at a time when too many young people in the region are languishing without work. So let's emerge from the familiar corners of blame and prejudice. Let's support Israeli and Palestinian leaders who are prepared to walk the difficult road to peace.

Now, real breakthroughs on these two issues—Iran's nuclear program, and Israeli-Palestinian peace—would have a profound and positive impact on the entire Middle East and North Africa. But the current convulsions arising out of the Arab Spring remind us that a just and lasting peace cannot be measured only by agreements between nations. It must also be measured by our ability to resolve conflict and promote justice within nations. And by that measure, it's clear that all of us have a lot more work to do.

When peaceful transitions began in Tunisia and Egypt, the entire world was filled with hope. And although the United States—like others—was struck by the speed of transition, and although we did not—and in fact could not—dictate events, we chose to support those who called for change. And we did so based on the belief that while these transitions will be hard and take time, societies based upon democracy and openness and the dignity of the individual will ultimately be more stable, more prosperous, and more peaceful.

Over the last few years, particularly in Egypt, we've seen just how hard this transition will be. Muhammad Mursi was democratically elected, but proved unwilling or unable to govern in a way that was fully inclusive. The Interim Government that replaced him responded to the desires of millions of Egyptians who believed the revolution had taken a wrong turn, but it, too, has made decisions inconsistent with inclusive democracy, through an emergency law and restrictions on the press and civil society and opposition parties.

Of course, America has been attacked by all sides of this internal conflict, simultaneously accused of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and engineering their removal of power. In fact, the United States has purposely avoided choosing sides. Our overriding interest throughout these past few years has been to encourage a government that legitimately reflects the will of the Egyptian people and recognizes true democracy as requiring a respect for minority rights and the rule of law, freedom of speech and assembly, and a strong civil society.

That remains our interest today. And so, going forward, the United States will maintain a constructive relationship with the Interim Government that promotes core interests like the Camp David accords and counterterrorism. We'll continue support in areas like education that directly benefit the Egyptian people. But we have not proceeded with the delivery of certain military systems, and our support will depend upon Egypt's progress in pursuing a more democratic path.

And our approach to Egypt reflects a larger point: The United States will at times work with governments that do not meet, at least in our view, the highest international expectations, but who work with us on our core interests. Nevertheless, we will not stop asserting principles that are consistent with our ideals, whether that means opposing the use of violence as a means of suppressing dissent or supporting the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We will reject the notion that these principles are simply Western exports, incompatible with Islam or the Arab World. We believe they are the birthright of every person. And while we recognize that our influence will at times be limited, although we will be wary of efforts to impose democracy through military force, and although we will at times be accused of hypocrisy and inconsistency, we will be engaged in the region for the long haul. For the hard work of forging freedom and democracy is the task of a generation.

And this includes efforts to resolve sectarian tensions that continue to surface in places like Iraq, Bahrain, and Syria. We understand such longstanding issues cannot be solved by outsiders; they must be addressed by Muslim communities themselves. But we've seen grinding conflicts come to an end before, most recently in Northern Ireland, where Catholics and Protestants finally recognized that an endless cycle of conflict was causing both communities to fall behind a fast-moving world. And so we believe those same sectarian conflicts can be overcome in the Middle East and North Africa.

To summarize, the United States has a hard-earned humility when it comes to our ability to determine events inside other countries. The notion of American empire may be useful propaganda, but it isn't borne out by America's current policy or by public opinion. Indeed, as recent debates within the United States over Syria clearly showed, the danger for the world is not an America that is too eager to immerse itself in the affairs of other countries or to take on every problem in the region as its own. The danger for the world is that the United States, after a decade of war—rightly concerned about issues back home, aware of the hostility that our engagement in the region has engendered throughout the Muslim world—may disengage, creating a vacuum of leadership that no other nation is ready to fill.

Now, I believe such disengagement would be a mistake. I believe America must remain engaged for our own security. But I also believe the world is better for it. Some may disagree, but I believe America is exceptional, in part because we have shown a willingness through the sacrifice of blood and treasure to stand up not only for our own narrow self-interests, but for the interests of all.

I must be honest though. We're far more likely to invest our energy in those countries that want to work with us, that invest in their people instead of a corrupt few, that embrace a vision of society where everyone can contribute: men and women; Shia or Sunni; Muslim, Christian or Jew. Because from Europe to Asia, from Africa to the Americas, nations that have persevered on a democratic path have emerged more prosperous, more peaceful, and more invested in upholding our common security and our common humanity. And I believe that the same will hold true for the Arab world.

And this leads me to a final point. There will be times when the breakdown of societies is so great, the violence against civilians so substantial, that the international community will be called upon to act. This will require new thinking and some very tough choices. While the United Nations was designed to prevent wars between states, increasingly we face the challenge of preventing slaughter within states. And these challenges will grow more pronounced as we are confronted with states that are fragile or failing, places where horrendous violence can put innocent men, women, and children at risk, with no hope of protection from their national institutions.

I have made it clear that even when America's core interests are not directly threatened, we stand ready to do our part to prevent mass atrocities and protect basic human rights. But we cannot and should not bear that burden alone. In Mali, we supported both the French intervention that successfully pushed back Al Qaida and the African forces who are keeping the peace. In Eastern Africa, we are working with partners to bring the Lord's Resistance Army to an end. And in Libya, when the Security Council provided a mandate to protect civilians, America joined a coalition that took action. And because of what we did there, countless lives were saved, and a tyrant could not kill his way back to power.

I know that some now criticize the action in Libya as an object lesson. They point to the problems that the country now confronts: a democratically elected Government struggling to provide security; armed groups, in some places extremists, ruling parts of a fractured land. And so these critics argue that any intervention to protect civilians is doomed to fail: "Look at Libya." Now, no one is more mindful of these problems than I am, for they resulted in the death of four outstanding U.S. citizens who were committed to the Libyan people, including Ambassador Chris Stevens, a man whose courageous efforts helped save the city

of Benghazi. But does anyone truly believe that the situation in Libya would be better if Qadhafi had been allowed to kill, imprison, or brutalize his people into submission? It's far more likely that without international action, Libya would now be engulfed in civil war and bloodshed.

So we live in a world of imperfect choices. Different nations will not agree on the need for action in every instance, and the principle of sovereignty is at the center of our international order. But sovereignty cannot be a shield for tyrants to commit wanton murder or an excuse for the international community to turn a blind eye. While we need to be modest in our belief that we can remedy every evil, while we need to be mindful that the world is full of unintended consequences, should we really accept the notion that the world is powerless in the face of a Rwanda or Srebrenica? If that's the world that people want to live in, they should say so and reckon with the cold logic of mass graves.

But I believe we can embrace a different future. And if we don't want to choose between inaction and war, we must get better—all of us—at the policies that prevent the breakdown of basic order: through respect for the responsibilities of nations and the rights of individuals; through meaningful sanctions for those who break the rules; through dogged diplomacy that resolves the root causes of conflict, not merely its aftermath; through development assistance that brings hope to the marginalized. And yes, sometimes—although this will not be enough—there are going to be moments where the international community will need to acknowledge that the multilateral use of military force may be required to prevent the very worst from occurring.

Ultimately, this is the international community that America seeks, one where nations do not covet the land or resources of other nations, but one in which we carry out the founding purpose of this institution and where we all take responsibility; a world in which the rules established out of the horrors of war can help us resolve conflicts peacefully and prevent the kinds of wars that our forefathers fought; a world where human beings can live with dignity and meet their basic needs, whether they live in New York or Nairobi, in Peshawar or Damascus.

These are extraordinary times, with extraordinary opportunities. Thanks to human progress, a child born anywhere on Earth today can do things today that 60 years ago would have been out of reach for the mass of humanity. I saw this in Africa, where nations moving beyond conflict are now poised to take off. And America is with them, partnering to feed the hungry and care for the sick and to bring power to places off the grid.

I see it across the Pacific region, where hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty in a single generation. I see it in the faces of young people everywhere who can access the entire world with the click of a button and who are eager to join the cause of eradicating extreme poverty and combating climate change, starting businesses, expanding freedom, and leaving behind the old ideological battles of the past. That's what's happening in Asia and Africa. It's happening in Europe and across the Americas. That's the future that the people of the Middle East and North Africa deserve as well, one where they can focus on opportunity, instead of whether they'll be killed or repressed because of who they are or what they believe.

Time and again, nations and people have shown our capacity to change: to live up to humanity's highest ideals, to choose our better history. Last month, I stood where, 50 years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr., told America about his dream, at a time when many people of my race could not even vote for President. Earlier this year, I stood in the small cell where Nelson Mandela endured decades cut off from his own people and the world. Who are we to believe that today's challenges cannot be overcome, when we've seen what changes the human spirit can bring? Who in this hall can argue that the future belongs to those who seek to repress that spirit rather than those who seek to liberate it?

I know what side of history I want to the United States of America to be on. We're ready to meet tomorrow's challenges with you,

firm in the belief that all men and women are in fact created equal, each individual possessed with a dignity and inalienable rights that cannot be denied. That is why we look to the future not with fear, but with hope. And that's why we remain convinced that this community of nations can deliver a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world to the next generation.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President of the U.N. General Assembly John W. Ashe; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; former President Muhammad Mursi of Egypt; and former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon in New York City

September 24, 2013

President Obama. It's a great pleasure to have the time to meet with President Sleiman of Lebanon. He has shown extraordinary leadership through a very challenging period for not only Lebanon, but also for the region. I appreciate his courage and determination to maintain Lebanon's unity and stability, and he has the full support of the United States in his efforts to uphold Lebanon's sovereignty and independence.

I commend the President's efforts in insisting that all parties in Lebanon refrain from engaging in the Syrian conflict. The United States strongly rejects Hizballah's deep involvement in the Syrian conflict, which, at this point, has displaced millions of people and threatens to destabilize the region. We are pleased that there may be progress in getting rid of Syria's chemical weapons, which I think would be important for the security not only of the Syrian people, but also for neighbors like Lebanon. And we will continue, as I said in my speech this morning, to press for a resolution of the Syrian conflict so that the rights of all Syrians are upheld, including Christians.

The Lebanese people have been tremendously generous during this difficult period, welcoming hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria into their homes and their villages. The United States is providing over $254 million in humanitarian assistance to assist refugees in Lebanon in communities that are hosting them. And as you heard me say today, I think it's very important for the international community to step up to do even more.

The United States also strongly supports the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces in maintaining Lebanon's stability. And today we're announcing an additional $8.7 million that will provide needed equipment in support of the Lebanese Armed Forces' internal stability and border security missions.

So, Mr. President, thank you for your strong efforts in maintaining unity and stability in Lebanon. You should feel confident that the United States will work very hard not only with you, but also in encouraging the international community to provide the support that Lebanon needs at this difficult time and to deal with the spillover of the crisis in Syria. And thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.

President Sleiman. Thank you very much.

At the outset, I would like to thank President Obama for fixing this meeting, that I consider very important in this period that Lebanon and the Middle East are going through. It is indeed a very difficult period and—because Lebanon lives in between various conflicts and crises that are now posing a threat to all of us.

First, we began with the Israeli conflict, which has led to the displacement of hundreds of Palestinian refugees towards Lebanon, and today, we are facing the Syrian crisis, which also has led to the displacement of around 1 million Syrians until now; they amount now to one-fourth of the Lebanese population.

The United States of America has provided continuous support to Lebanon. It has supported the political process. It has supported the Lebanese Armed Forces. And today we have heard President Obama declare the allocation of 8.7 additional million dollars for the Lebanese Army, aside from the assistance provided by the United States to support the refugees in order to enable us to host them and, of course, the United States contribution to the adoption of the Presidential declaration by the Security Council on the 10th of July, which constitutes a roadmap for the support of Lebanon on all levels.

At the eve of the international meeting for the International Support Group for Lebanon scheduled for tomorrow, the 25th of September, we do hope that the United States will have a great contribution to this meeting in order to provide further political and economic support for Lebanon, as well as support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and the necessary support to assimilate or to take in the Syrian refugees.

Of course, taking in the Syrian refugees depends on Lebanon's sharing the financial burdens of taking them in, as well as their numeral burdens, through thinking of implicating or involving the states in hosting some numbers of these refugees. This, of course, requires to consider how they can be relocated and hosted in some safe zones inside Syria if further tension occurs and working also on returning some of these refugees to Syria, to some safe zones, through the international—the U.N. organizations. Of course, Syria has plenty of vast spaces away from the conflict, which can allocate—where they can be relocated. And here, we have to mention that the area of Syria is 18 times that of Lebanon.

At the political level, the Lebanese Constitution, which was based on the Taif Accord, has settled—set up a safety net, a political safety net in Lebanon, which helped him to get over all the crises. At this point of time, during this period, we need an international escort through an international safety net to spare us all the repercussions of the crises and conflicts going on around Lebanon.

This political process has to be pursued in Lebanon by putting into application the Baabda Declaration. The Baabda Declaration is the agreement reached by all the members of the National Dialogue Committee. And it sets out not to interfere in the Syrian affairs by all the Lebanese parties. Of course, we are working and striving in order to implement the—all the provisions of this declaration by all the Lebanese parties.

On the other hand, we wish that the necessary impetus would be given to support the Lebanese Armed Forces through the 5-year capabilities building plan in order to enable it to undertake all its mission regarding the defense exclusively of the Lebanese territories and countering the terrorist operations which have reached out to all the world. And Lebanon, of course, can be a victim of these actions—terrorist actions—as a result of the extension of extremism and terrorism in the region.

Of course, all these issues, they come in the frame of the expected solutions in the region, and first of all, the solution for Syria. We hope that the American-Russian agreement about the chemical weapons will mark the beginning of the process of finding a political solution that will ensure democracy in Syria as well as peace and security in this neighboring country.

Of course, we have to talk about the ongoing negotiations, under U.S. patronage, between the Palestinians and the Israelis about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We hope that these negotiations will be a step towards comprehensive negotiations aiming at reaching peace, a just and comprehensive solution for the Middle East according to the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, the international resolutions, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Of course, this negotiation—these negotiations, they affect the neighboring countries and especially Lebanon, which have a pending fight in this context that relates to the settlement of the Palestinian refugees. Lebanon cannot accept the settlement of these refugees on its territory, according to the Arab Peace Initiative.

In all cases, we hope that attention will be given to the security of the Arab region. This region is characterized by cultural and civilizational diversity. It is the cradle of the divine religions, and we hope that it will be taken as a strategic objective for peace in the Middle East and in the world.

Of course, this can be done by facilitating and preserving the presence of the constituents of these countries. I mean by that the civilization constituents which are deeply rooted in these countries. These are the minorities. We have to preserve a free and active presence of these minorities not only by catering for their physiological and security needs, but also by involving them in political activity of the country where they live, regardless of their numbers, but taking into account the civilization that these minorities represent.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:42 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. President Sleiman spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations in New York City
September 24, 2013

Ladies and gentlemen, as is always the case with these lunches, I exceeded my time this morning, and so you've heard enough from me. [*Laughter*] But as President of the host country, I do simply want to say thank you to all of you and express my appreciation for Secretary Ban for his principled leadership as well as the extraordinary hard work of his team.

Mr. Secretary-General, you continue to provide the moral vision that we seek from the United Nations as well as a practical sense of how we can achieve that vision. And so on behalf of all of us, we want to say thank you very much.

I also want to salute all who help sustain our United Nations, often unseen and unheralded. This includes the dedicated U.N. inspectors in Damascus who set out into battlefield conditions. They braved sniper fire. They worked diligently with great professionalism. They uncovered the truth, and they have the thanks of the world. Meanwhile, we see thousands of peacekeepers in blue helmets standing watch around the world from Haiti to the D.R.C. to Cyprus so that people in countries recovering from conflict and strife can have the chance to build a more hopeful life.

After the Yalta Conference, shortly before the United Nations was founded, President Roosevelt spoke of what it would take to achieve a lasting and durable peace. "The structure of world peace," he said, "cannot be the work of one man or one party or one nation. It cannot be an American peace or a British, a Russian, a French, or a Chinese peace. It cannot be a peace of large nations or of small nations. It must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world." These words are more true today than ever, whether it's preventing the spread of deadly weapons, promoting democratic governance, or fighting daily battles against poverty and hunger and deprivation. International peace, development, and security will not be achieved by one nation or one group of nations. It must be the work of all of us.

So I want to propose a toast to our host and great friend, Secretary-General Ban, to all those here in New York and around the world who help sustain the United Nations, and to the spirit that we need: the cooperative effort of the whole world. Cheers. *Salud.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:37 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in New York City
September 24, 2013

President Obama. I want to thank President Abbas for this opportunity to speak to him once again. The last time that we had an extensive discussion was in Ramallah during my visit to both Israel and the West Bank. And at that time, I said to both sides that I remain deeply committed and the United States remains deeply committed to bringing about a just and lasting peace to a conflict that has been going on too long.

And I want to say that President Abbas, I think, has consistently rejected violence, has recognized the need for peace, and I'm grateful to him for his efforts.

The position of the United States has been clear. The border of Israel and Palestine should be based on 1967's lines, with mutually agreed-to swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states, with robust security provisions so that Israel retains the ability to defend itself, by itself, against any threats.

And I am very pleased that President Abbas has been willing to enter into a negotiation. Sitting directly at the table, we've seen Palestinian and Israeli representatives discuss some of the most difficult issues that have been roadblocks to peace for too long.

None of us are under any illusion that this would be easy. As I said in my speech this morning, it has already entailed significant political risk by President Abbas, as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu. But I think the reason that they've been willing to take those risks is, they realize this is the best way—the only way—for us to achieve what should be our goal: two states living side by side in peace and security. It's right for Palestinian children. It's right for Israeli children.

And having leaders who are willing to look out into the future and take risks on behalf of that better history is something that the United States intends to support as strongly as possible. And I'm urging all my counterparts, heads of state here at the United Nations, to support this effort as well.

Last point I would make: The Palestinian Authority has been a critical mechanism to improve governance and increase transparency in the West Bank. Obviously, the Palestinian Authority operates under significant constraints, including resource constraints. But we think it's very important that we continue to support efforts that have been made by the Authority, for example, to improve internal security and professionalize security forces inside the Authority. And that, I think, lays also an important foundation for the kind of economic development and governance that will be critical for an independent Palestinian state.

So, Mr. President, thank you for taking the time to be with me here today. And I look forward to our discussions.

President Abbas. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for hosting us here and agreeing to meet with us to discuss very critical issues related to the peace process in the Middle East.

And we still—and our people still—remember very proudly the historical visit that you paid to the Palestinian Territories, after which we launched peace negotiations with your support and help, and also with the involvement of Mr. Kerry.

And we appreciate all the support that the U.S. is extending to the Palestinian people to build the state—the institutions of the future Palestinian state, which, hopefully, will materialize very soon with your support and continued assistance.

And as we have said in the past—and we can continue to reiterate—that we are fully committed to the peace process so that we can reach a final settlement that ultimately will lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state that would live side by side in peace and security with Israel.

And as you have indicated, Mr. President, we have no illusions that peace will be easy or simple. And we have to overcome several

difficulties, but we realize that peace in the Middle East is not just important for the Palestinians and the Israelis, it's important for the entire region and the world.

We appreciate your support for the continuation of the negotiations, and we will exert every effort possible to make sure that they will succeed and to take advantage of this historical opportunity. We understand there would be difficulties, but we will do our utmost best to overcome them.

President Obama. Thank you, my friend. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:06 p.m. in the Security Council Consultation Room at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. President Abbas referred to Secretary of State John F. Kerry. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the Clinton Global Initiative Health Care Forum in New York City

September 24, 2013

Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Good afternoon, everyone. Well, thank you. Thank you very much. I have the great pleasure to introduce our next two speakers, who are about to have a conversation concerning health care. And I thought hard about how to introduce these two men. [*Laughter*]

And the more I thought about it, the more I realized how much they have in common. They are both left handed. [*Laughter*] They both love golf, a game that does not often reciprocate the love they put into it. [*Laughter*] They both are fanatic sports fans and go to great lengths to be in front of the TV or on the side of the court or the field. They both are master politicians. Each of them has only lost one election. They are both Democrats. They have fabulous daughters. They each married far above themselves. [*Laughter*] And they each love our country.

And so please join me in welcoming number 42 and number 44, Bill Clinton and President Barack Obama.

President Obama. Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

Former President William J. Clinton. Are you interviewing me? You——

President Obama. That would be bad. I've been talking a lot today.

Former President Clinton. I want to thank you for giving Hillary a job. That was a good thing you did. [*Laughter*] Thank you for coming.

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to be back. And let me start just by saying to all the people who have for years now supported the incredible efforts of CGI, thank you. Because wherever we travel, all across the globe, we see the impact that it's making every single day. And we're very proud of what you all do.

And let me say that we still miss our former Secretary of State. And I should add that there's nothing she said that was not true, particularly the part about us marrying up. [*Laughter*]

Former President Clinton. Well, that brings me to my first health care comment. This is going to be a conversation about domestic and international health, and America's role in it. But I want to begin by telling you that I think the First Lady has done a great job in this fight against childhood obesity.

We have been honored at our foundation to be asked to represent her effort in 18,000 schools where we've lowered the calories in drinks being served in schools by 90 percent. But she's been great on that. The other thing, I think, is that I was a little upset—and as you know, called one of your administration members when you got to Africa—when I read an article that said that you didn't have a big initiative in Africa. And I said—I can't say exactly what I said—[*laughter*]—but I said, that is inaccurate. [*Laughter*] That's the sanitized version of what I said. [*Laughter*]

Because when the President took office, our programs—begun under President Bush, PEPFAR—was giving antiretroviral medicine to 1.7 million people. Because of an agreement that I made with President Bush to use generic drugs that were approved by the FDA, about half our drugs were being purchased in that way. Under President Obama, we've gone to 99 percent. We are treating more than 5.1 million people, three times as many for less money.

That is a stunning legacy—so that more money has been put into malaria medicine, bed nets, so you saved a lot of money and saved more lives while doing it. And I'm very proud of that. And I want to thank you for it. It's important.

I—now, maybe at the end of this conversation we can get back to some of your current global health initiatives. But let's talk a little about the health care law, because we're about to begin, on October the 1st, open enrollment for 6 months. And I'd like to give you a chance, first of all, to tell them why—when you took office, we were teetering on the brink of a depression. You had to avert it. You had to start the recovery again. Why in the midst of all this grief did you also take on this complex issue? Many people were saying, why didn't he just focus on the economy and leave this alone? So tell us why you did it.

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think it's important to remember that health care is the economy, a massive part of our economy. And so the idea that somehow we can separate out the two is a fallacy.

Second of all, the effort for us to deal with a multifaceted health care crisis has been going on for decades. And the person who just introduced us, as well as you, early in your Presidency, had as much to do with helping to shape the conversation as anybody.

The fact is that we have been, up until recently, the only advanced industrialized nation on Earth that permits large numbers of its people to languish without health insurance. Not only is there the cruelty of people who are unable to get health insurance having to use the emergency room as their doctor or their health service, but we're also more efficient than anybody else. And so when we talk about, for example, our deficit—you know this better than anybody—the reason that we have not only current deficits, but also projected long-term deficits, the structural deficit that we have, is primarily based on the fact that we have a hugely inefficient, wildly expensive health care system that does not produce better outcomes.

And if we spent the same amount of money on health care that Canada or France or Great Britain did, or Japan, or any other industrialized country, with the same outcomes or better outcomes, that essentially would remove our structural deficit, which would then free up dollars for us to invest in early childhood education and infrastructure and medical research and all the other things that can make sure that we're competitive and growing rapidly over the long term.

So my view when I came into office was, we've got an immediate crisis, we've got to get the economy growing. But what we also have to do is to start tackling some of these structural problems that had been building up for years. And one of the biggest structural problems was health care. It's what accounts for our deficit. It's what accounts for our debt. It causes pain and misery to millions of people all across the country. It is a huge burden on our businesses.

I was out at a Ford plant out in Missouri—and making the F series out there, and this is a big stamping plant. Ford is now the biggest seller in the United States. We took that lead back from the Japanese automakers. But we are still burdened by the fact that every U.S. automobile that is manufactured requires a couple of thousand dollars in added health care costs that our foreign competitors don't have to pay.

So this is—has everything to do with the economy, in addition to what I consider to be the moral imperative that a mom should not have to go bankrupt if her son or daughter gets sick, that a family who's dealing with a layoff and is already struggling to pay the bills shouldn't also be wondering whether they're one illness away from losing their home. And I think most Americans agree with that.

Former President Clinton. So, first of all, folks, for those of you who are from the United States, I—that's about as good an overview as you're ever going to hear of what this economic issue is. But you remember the President said our structural deficit would disappear if we had a comparable health care system in terms of cost to the French and Germans that are consistently rated the highest? It's about a trillion dollars a year, and somewhere around 44 percent of that money is Government-funded money. So you just run the numbers. Think—over half of our deficit has already disappeared because of economic growth and the revenues you raised and the spending we cut. And you pretty much get rid of the rest of it if we just had a comparably expensive system to any other country.

Before you took office, we lost a car company that wanted to locate in Michigan that went instead to Canada, and they announced—they said, look, we're a car company that provides health care benefits to our employees, we're not a health care company that sells cars to cover our bills. We have to go to Canada. So I think this is—and it was one of the few companies willing to go on record and say this. So thank you for doing it.

So let's talk about this. What does this open enrollment mean? How are people going to get involved? When you have universal enrollment, you can manage your costs better and cut inflation down.

I'll give the President a chance to talk about all the good stuff that's happened, but I just want you to know one thing. In the last 3 years, just as we started doing this, inflation in health care costs has dropped to 4 percent for 3 years in a row for the first time in 50 years. Fifty years. For the—before that, the costs were going up at three times the rate of inflation for a decade.

So now what? What are you going to do on October 1? Tell them how this has got to work.

President Obama. Well, let me give folks just a little bit of background about what's already in place and then what happens on October 1.

When we passed the Affordable Care Act, there were a number of components to it. A big part of it was essentially providing a Patient's Bill of Rights that Americans and advocates had been fighting for for decades. So what we wanted to do was make sure if you already have health insurance that you get a fair deal, that you're being treated well by your insurers.

So we eliminated—prohibited insurance companies from imposing lifetime limits, which oftentimes if a family member really got sick, they thought they were covered until suddenly, they hit that limit and now they're out hundreds of thousands of dollars with no way of paying.

We said to insurance companies, you've got to use at least 80 percent of your premium that you're receiving on actual health care, not on administrative costs and CEO bonuses. And if you don't, you've got to rebate anything that you spent back to the consumer. So there are millions of Americans who have received rebates. They may not know that they got it because of the Affordable Care Act, or quote, unquote, "Obamacare," but I—but they're pretty happy to get those rebates back, because it made sure that the insurance companies were treating folks fairly.

We said that any young person who doesn't have health insurance can stay on their parent's health insurance until they're 26 years old. And as a consequence, what we've seen is steadily the rate of uninsured for young people dropping over the last 3 years since the bill passed and obviously providing a lot of relief to a lot of parents out there. Because a lot of young people, as they've been entering into the job market at a time when jobs are tough to get and oftentimes benefits are slim, this is providing enormous security until they get more firmly established in the labor market.

We provided additional discounts for prescription drugs for seniors under the Medicare program. And so seniors have saved billions of dollars when it comes to their prescription drugs.

So there have been, over the last 3 years, a whole array of consumer protections and sav-

ings for consumers that result directly from the law that we passed. And for those who say that they want to repeal it, typically when you ask them about, what would all these various benefits—they say, well, that one is good, and that one is pretty good, and we'd keep that. And you pretty much go down the list, and there's not too much people object to.

You will recall also at the time that part of the way that we paid for the health care bill was, we said Medicare is wasting a lot of money without making seniors healthier. And there was a lot of hue and cry about how we were taking money out of Medicare. Well, it turns out that we were right: that we could change how doctors and hospitals and providers were operating, rewarding them for outcomes, as opposed to simply how many procedures that they did. You started seeing practices change among millions of providers across the country. Medicare rates have actually slowed in terms of inflation. Seniors have saved money. Folks are healthier. And some of those savings we've been able to use to make sure that people who don't have health insurance get health insurance.

Now, this brings me to October 1. The one part of the Affordable Care Act that required several years to set up, but a critical part, was how do we provide health insurance for individuals who don't get health insurance through the job? It's a historical accident that in this country, health care is attached to employers. And part of the problem is, if you're out there shopping for health insurance on your own, you're not part of a big pool, well, there's no aggregation of risk taking place for the insurers. So they're basically going to say, let's see, you're 50 years old. You got high blood pressure. And we just look at the actuarial tables, and we figure you're going to get sick, so we're going to charge you $1,500 a month for health insurance, which the average person has no way of affording. Because there's no pooling of risk.

So what we said was, we need to set up a mechanism to pool people who currently don't have health insurance so that they have the same purchasing power, the same leverage, that a big company does when they're negotiating with the insurance company.

And essentially, what we've done is, we've created what we're calling marketplaces in every State across the country where consumers are now able to be part of a big pool. Insurers have to bid—essentially compete—for the business of that pool. And what we now have set up are these marketplaces that provide high-quality health care at affordable prices, giving people choices so that they can get the health insurance that they need and they want. And the premiums are significantly lower than what they were able to previously get.

I'll take the example of New York State. The insurers put in their bids to participate in these marketplaces. It turns out that their rates are up to 50-percent lower than what was available previously if you just went on the open market and you tried to get health insurance. Fifty percent lower in this State. California, it's about 33-percent lower. In my home State of Illinois—they just announced—it's about 25-percent lower.

So just by pooling and creating competition so that insurers have to go after people's business the way they go after a group plan, we have drastically reduced premiums and costs. On top of that, what we're now doing is we're saying, if with the better deal that you got you still can't afford it, we're going to give you tax credits to essentially subsidize your purchase of health insurance.

And here's the net result. We'll be continuing to roll out what the actual prices are going to end up being, but I can tell you right now that in many States across the country, if you're, say, a 27-year-old young woman, don't have health insurance, you get on that exchange, you're going to be able to purchase high-quality health insurance for less than the cost of your cell phone bill. And because all the insurers who participate are required to, for example, provide free preventive care, free contraceptive care, that young woman, she may make up what she's spending on premiums just on her monthly use of health care.

So this is going to be a good deal for those who don't have health insurance. Those who

already have health insurance get better health insurance. And the best part of the whole thing is, because of these changes we initiated in terms of how we're paying providers, health care costs have grown, as you've pointed out, Mr. President, at the slowest rate in 50 years. We are bending the cost curve and getting at the problems that are creating our deficits in Medicare and Medicaid.

Former President Clinton. I should point out that, so far, in most States, one of the good things that at least I didn't know whether it would happen is that when we began this in the United States, more than 80 percent of the American States had only one or two companies writing health insurance who had more than 80 percent of the market. So there was, in effect, no price competition. So what I was terrified of was, we'd open these things, and there would only be one company show up and bid, and this whole thing, we'd be having an academic conversation. Instead, it's actually led to the establishment of more companies doing more bidding.

And I think part of it is, they have greater confidence that they can deliver health care at a more modest cost. So, so far, it's good. But I think it's important for you to the tell the people why we're doing all this outreach, because this only works, for example, if young people show up. And even if they buy the cheapest plan, then they claim their tax credits, so it won't cost them much, 100 bucks a month or so. We've got to have them in the pools, because otherwise, all these projected low costs cannot be held if older people with preexisting conditions are disproportionately represented in any given State. You've got to have everybody lined up.

So explain what kind of—all the work you've been doing on the outreach for the opening on October.

President Obama. Well, I think President Clinton makes a really important point. And the way pools work, any pool, is essentially those of us who are healthy subsidize somebody who is sick at any given time. We do that because we anticipate, well, at some point we'll get sick, and we hope the healthy person is in our pool, so those costs and those risks get spread. That's what insurance is all about.

And what happens is, if you don't have pools that are a cross-section of society, then people who are already sick or more likely to get sick, they'll all rush out and buy insurance. People who are healthy, they say, you know what, I won't bother. And you get what's called adverse selection. Essentially, what happens is, is that the premiums start going higher and higher because the risks aren't spread broadly enough across the population.

So you want to get a good cross-section in every pool. That's why big companies have an easier time getting good rates for their employees than small companies, because if you only have five employees, one person is stricken with breast cancer, let's say, your rates potentially shoot up. But if it's a thousand employees, then it gets spread out.

So, on October 1, open enrollment begins. All these folks can start signing up for the marketplace. And what we want to make sure of is that everybody, in every category, every age group, understands why health insurance is important, understands why they should sign up, understands the choices that are going to be available to them. They're going to be able to go to a computer, tap on the web page, and they're going to be able to shop just like you shop for an airline ticket or a flat-screen TV and see what's the best price for you, what's the plan that's best suited for you, and go ahead and sign up right there and then.

And that open enrollment period will last from October 1 until the end of March, and so there will be 6 months for folks to sign up. Normally, this would be pretty straightforward. A lot of people don't have health insurance. A lot of people realize they should get health insurance. But let's face it, it's been a little political, this whole Obamacare thing. [*Laughter*] And so what you've had is an unprecedented effort that you've seen ramp up over the last month or so in which those who have opposed the idea of universal health care in the first place and have fought this thing tooth and nail through Congress and through the courts and so forth are—have been trying to scare and dis-

courage people from getting a good deal. And some of you may have seen some of the commercials out there that are a little whacky.

And the main message we have—and we're using social media, we're talking to churches, we're talking to various civic groups—and what we're saying to people is, look, just go to the website yourself. Go to healthcare.gov, take a look at whether this is a good deal or not, make your own decision about whether this is good for you. Because what we are confident about is that when people look and see that they can get high-quality, affordable health care for less than their cell phone bill, they're going to sign up. They are going to sign up.

And part of what, I think, the resistance that we've seen ramp up particularly over the last couple of months is all about is the opponents of health care reform know they're going to sign up. In fact, one of the major opponents, when asked, well, why is it that you'd potentially shut down the Government at this point just to block Obamacare, he basically fessed up. He said, well, once consumers get hooked on having health insurance and subsidies, then they won't want to give it up. [*Laughter*] I mean, that's—you can look at the transcript. This is one of the major opponents of health care reform. It is an odd logic. Essentially, they're saying people will like this thing too much, and then it will be really hard to roll back.

So it is very important that people just know what's out there, what's available to them, and let people make up their own minds as to whether it makes sense or not.

Now, one last thing I want to say, because I do think sometimes—people come up to me, and they say, well, if this is such a good deal, how come the polls show that it's not popular? Well, one of the things you and I both know is that when you come to health care, there's no more personal and intimate decision for people. I mean, this is something that people really care about. And frankly, the devil you know is always the better—better than the devil you don't know. And that's what "Harry and Louise" was all about back in the nineties, right? It was scaring people with the prospect of change.

And so part of our goal here is just to make sure people have good information. And there has been billions of dollars spent making people scared and worried about this stuff. And rather than trying to disabuse people of every single bit of misinformation that's been out there, what we're saying is just look for yourself. Take a look at it, and you will discover that this is a good deal for you.

Former President Clinton. Well, let's—first of all, I completely agree with that. I think what—we've got to just drive people to the websites. The States that are participating—the Supreme Court decision would—upheld the health care law said that States didn't have to set up these marketplaces if they didn't want to, but if they didn't the Federal Government would set it up. They also said that States didn't have to expand Medicaid coverage to help people whose incomes are up to 138 percent of the Federal poverty level buy health insurance.

There are some States, believe it or not, that want the marketplace, but don't want the Medicaid. And that's going to lead to a cruel result, and there's nothing the President can do, and it's not his fault. That's what the Supreme Court said. So we can have this bizarre situation where, let's say, a business with 60 employees can—or an individual going into the individual market will get the benefit of tax credits for everybody with incomes of 138 percent of the Federal poverty level or above, but they won't get it for people who are between 100 and 138 percent. So lower income people who desperately need the health insurance, we would have the cruelest of all situations in those States. And there's nothing the President can do about it because of the Supreme Court decision. So we have to persuade the States to come on. But more and more States with Republican Governors, Republican legislatures, are doing it.

President Obama. Well——

Former President Clinton. Tell them about Arkansas, because we're doing well down there. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. No, no, no. A little hometown bias here, there's nothing wrong with

that. [*Laughter*] A couple of things that are happening that I think are very interesting. First of all, look, I'm sympathetic to some of these Republican Governors who are under a lot of pressure because the whole issue of whether you're for Obamacare or not has become a litmus test in the other party. So some of them, politically have—it's been tough; sometimes, State legislatures that refuse to allow Governors to go ahead and implement.

But as you indicated, what we've seen is that when Republican Governors take a look at the deal they're getting where, in addition to these exchanges, we're also providing a much more significant match, much more Federal money to provide health insurance—from the State's perspective, they're not paying; the Federal Government is picking up the tab—and this is helping them because people are no longer going to the emergency room and they now have good health care, they're now getting preventive care. You're seeing some Republican Governors step up and saying, I may not like Obamacare, but I'm going to go ahead and make sure that my people are benefiting from this plan. So that's one good thing that's happening.

The second thing that's happening is, there are a couple of States—Arkansas is a good example; Kentucky is another good example; Idaho, interesting example—now, these are States where I just got beat. I mean, I do not have a big constituency in these States. [*Laughter*] Well, I take that back. You know what, I mean, 40 percent is still a lot of people. But I'm losing by 20 percent in these States. But the Governors were still able to say, we're going to set up our own State exchanges, their own marketplaces. And each State is just using their own name for it.

So I had a meeting—I had a conference, a video conference with all the State directors of all the marketplaces, and I'm talking to the director in Kentucky and Idaho. And in Kentucky, it's called, like, Kentucky Connect. And in Idaho, it's called the Idaho Health Care Exchange. And there's a story that came out of Kentucky where some folks were signing people up at a county fair somewhere. Some guy goes up, and he starts looking at the rates and decides he's going to sign up. And he turns to his friend and said, this is a great deal. This is a lot better than Obamacare. [*Laughter*] Right? Which is fine. [*Laughter*] Because we—I don't have pride of authorship on this thing. I just want the thing to work.

And Arkansas just came out with its rates, and as has been true in virtually every single State, not only are premiums lower than they were, they're a lot lower than even the most optimistic predictions were about how low they would be.

And once these marketplaces are up and running, it turns out that what has traditionally been a pretty conservative principle, which is, competition and choice work, well, in the insurance market, competition and choice work. And what we're seeing is that people are going to be able to get the kind of health care that they have never been able to get before. States are going to benefit from it because they're going to save money.

And one thing that all of you—there are probably very few people in this room who don't have health insurance, although if you don't, you should sign up starting on October 1. [*Laughter*] One of the things that many people don't realize is that the subsidy that all of you provide for the uninsured is about a thousand dollars per family. You pay a thousand dollars—everybody here who has got health insurance pays about a thousand dollars more for your family's insurance than you otherwise would have, because hospitals are mandated, they are required to provide service to anybody who shows up. And so what happens is when you've got 15 percent of the population without health insurance, they end up showing up at the emergency room, typically at a point when they're much sicker than if they had been getting regular checkups and preventive care. So you pay for the most expensive care there is, because hospitals have got to recoup that money someway.

And the way they do it is to charge higher prices. And people who have health insurance end up picking it up. So part of what will—helps reduce the increase in health care costs is

making sure that that hidden subsidy no longer exists.

Former President Clinton. Let's talk a little bit about business, because we're out of time, but I think it's really important. When I—as you pointed out, most people who have insurance work for a living, or somebody in their family does, and they get their insurance through their workplace. The law says that all employers have to participate if they have 50 employees or more. Many employers with fewer than 50 employees already voluntarily provide some health insurance.

Both the companies with 50 or more and the companies with fewer than 50 are somewhat concerned. And the employees that have to be insured are those who work 30 hours a week or more. So there were many people who speculated that when this law came into place that it would add to the cost and there would be a lot more part-time workers instead of full-time workers. I'll save the President the time and the energy on this: So far, that's not true. The overwhelming number of people who have been hired coming out of this recession have been—they have been hired at lower wages, but they have been full-time employees.

There has not been an increase in the percentage of our employment in part-time work. There has been an increase in relatively lower wage new jobs. But that means they need health insurance even more. So explain very briefly to them how this is going to work, how private employers are helped to buy their insurance and the requirements.

President Obama. Good. Well, first of all, if you're a large employer or an employer with more than 50 employees, you're already providing health insurance, you don't have to do anything other than just make sure that you can show that you're providing health insurance.

And there was a lot of news recently about how we delayed the so-called employer mandate for a year. Because under the law, what it says is, if you have more than 50 employees, you're not providing health insurance to your employees, then you're going to pay a penalty to help subsidize—to help pay for—the fact that some—we, the taxpayers, are going to have to provide your employees with health insurance, which, by the way, is only fair.

A lot of the controversy around the Affordable Care Act had to do with these so-called mandates, both an employer mandate and an individual mandate. And the employer mandate says, if you don't meet your responsibilities by your employees, and they end up getting Medicaid or they're ending up in the emergency room, you're basically dumping those costs onto society. That's not fair. So we're going to charge you a couple thousand dollars to help pay for health care for those employees.

To the individuals, what we said was, we're going to make health insurance so affordable, so cheap for you, so heavily subsidized if you're not making a lot of money, that if you're not getting health insurance, then it's because you just decided you don't want to, you don't need to. And in that circumstance, what happens when you get hit by a bus, heaven forbid, or somebody in your family gets sick and you hadn't had them covered? Well, we're going to end up having to pay for you anyway because we're not going to just let somebody bleed in front of the emergency room. So what we've said is, you've got to take responsibility, and so there's a small penalty if you don't get health insurance.

This is where a lot of the controversy and unpopularity came in, because people generally don't like to be told, "You've got to get health insurance," and employers don't like be told, "You've got to give your employees health insurance." But as a society, what we cannot do is to say, you have no responsibilities whatsoever, but you've got guaranteed coverage.

And this raises the whole issue of preexisting conditions, which we haven't talked a lot about, but is really important. One of the central components of this law—one of the main perversities of the health care system before this law passed was there were millions of people around the country who, if you had gotten sick before, if you had had a heart attack, if you had had cancer, if you had diabetes; and let's say, when it first happened you had a job, you got

cured; then you lose your job or you're trying to change jobs or you're trying to start a business, you try to go out and get health insurance, the health insurance company not only could deny you, but had every incentive to deny you. Because, basically, they'd rather have healthy people who are paying premiums and never asking for a payout. They don't want somebody who, actuarially, they can anticipate might get sick.

And so keep in mind that a huge percentage of our society has some sort of preexisting condition, and they can be locked out. You can do everything right, work hard, build a strong middle class life, but if you've been sick and then you lose your job or something happens, you may suddenly be locked out of the insurance market or the premiums may be so high that only somebody fabulously rich could afford them.

So what we said is, all right, you know what, insurance companies, you can no longer bar somebody from getting health insurance just because they've got a preexisting condition. But the only way that works is if everybody has a requirement to get health insurance. Because think about what happens if you don't have that rule. Well, all of us—not all of us, but a lot of us who were trying to figure out how to save some money would say, well, I'm not going to worry about it until I get sick, and then right when I'm diagnosed with something that's going to be expensive, I'll go to the insurance company and say, you can't prevent me from getting health insurance just because I've got a preexisting condition. So they could potentially game the system, and it wouldn't work.

So now what we've done is said you've got to provide health insurance to anybody, all comers, that's the deal. The flip side of it is everybody has got some responsibility, and we'll help you pay for it, to get health insurance. And that's where a lot of the misunderstandings, the frustrations, about health care reform came in.

I should add, by the way, that this was the same proposition that was set up in Massachusetts under a Governor named Mitt Romney that's working really well. Ninety-nine percent of people in Massachusetts have coverage. And that same principle was, ironically, considered a very smart Republican, conservative principle. But it was the right one. The economics of it are true.

So, just to finish up the question, when it comes to businesses, if you're already providing health insurance for your employees, that's great. You don't have to do much other than just make sure that you show us that you've got health insurance for your employees.

If you have more than 50 employees, and you're not providing health insurance for them, you now have the opportunity to join a pool of small businesses to get a better price and a better deal on health insurance. You're eligible for tax credits in providing health insurance to your employees. Up to 35 percent of the premiums for each employee will be a tax benefit—a tax credit—from the Federal Government. But if you still aren't providing health insurance for your employees after that, then we're going to go ahead and penalize you for it.

And I can understand why some businesses wouldn't want to pay for it. If they're not currently providing health insurance for their employees, what that means is that they'd rather have those additional profits than make sure that their employees are getting a fair deal.

In some cases, they may be operating under some very small margins. But keep in mind, since people are—companies are exempted, the average small business with 5 employees, mom-and-pop shop, 10 employees, they're not under that requirement. So I'm not that sympathetic to a company, typically, if it's got more than 50 employees and generating some significant revenue, we're making it affordable for them to provide health insurance for their employees. They should do the right thing.

Former President Clinton. I agree with that. We have to close, but I think there's one last issue we ought to deal with. The most important thing obviously is just to get people enrolled in this. We'll work through it as we go along.

But the—you just heard the President say that so far in virtually every State, the actual prices of the insurance are coming in quite a

bit lower than they were originally estimated to. With the original price estimates and with the Government obligated to provide subsidies—which costs money on the budget, right?—it was, nonetheless, estimated that in the first 10 years, this would keep the national debt $110 billion lower than it otherwise would have been, which means if we come in at even less, we can bring the debt down more, or we can subsidize more small businesses and get more small businesses into this loop.

A lot of people come to me and say, now, you sound like the people you used to criticize who say we could cut taxes all day long, increase spending and balance the budget. Don't give me that; this sounds too good to be true. So I think on your—before you leave, you should tell people how we can spend more—not so much in direct spending, but in tax credits—and still wind up reducing overall Federal spending by $110 billion during this decade.

President Obama. Well, a couple of things just in terms of how this whole thing got paid for. First of all, I think it's really important to point out here that the total cost of the Affordable Care Act to provide health insurance for every American out there at an affordable rate is costing about the same amount over the course of 10 years as the costs of the prescription drug bill that President Bush passed; except that wasn't paid for. We felt obliged to actually pay for it and not just add to the deficit.

So what we did, it's paid for by a combination of things. We did raise taxes on some things. We, for example, said that for high-income individuals, you can pay a slightly higher Medicare rate—Medicare tax. So we bumped that up a little bit. We said that for employers who are currently providing a so-called Cadillac health care plan, where there are so many bells and whistles, there's no incentive to actually spend wisely when it comes to health care, we're actually going to penalize you for that, not only to raise a little bit of money, but also to say you're encouraging the worst aspects of a health care system where you spend a lot of money, you don't get better outcomes.

I mentioned to you Medicare. We basically said, there's a program in Medicare called Medicare Advantage that provides some additional options for Medicare recipients above and beyond standard Medicare. And it's very popular with a lot of seniors. You get eyeglasses and other benefits. But it turned out that it was so uncompetitive that we were providing tens of billions of dollars of subsidies to the insurance companies under this Medicare Advantage Plan without getting better outcomes, health outcomes, for seniors.

So what we said was we'll keep Medicare Advantage and we'll give them a small premium if they're providing better services for seniors, but we're going to make you compete for it a little bit. And we're going to save tens of billions of dollars in the process, and that will go into paying for the Affordable Care Act.

So the bottom line is, through these various mechanisms, we raised enough money to pay for providing health insurance for those who don't have it, to provide these health—or these tax credits in the marketplace, and at the same time, because we're driving down costs, we actually end up saving a little money. It is a net reduction of our deficit.

The irony of those who are talking about repealing Obamacare because it's so wildly expensive is, if they actually repealed the law, it would add to the deficit. It would add to the deficit.

Now, there have been a couple of Republicans in the House who have been smart enough to say, we're going to repeal all the benefits so that people—25, 30 million people—don't get health insurance, but we're going to keep the taxes that Obama raised, we just won't talk about that. And then, that way we can say we reduced the deficit. But obviously, you're doing some funny business there with the budget.

But look, nothing is free. The bottom line, though, is, do we want to continue to live in a society where we've got the most inefficient health care system on Earth, leaving millions of people exposed to the possibilities that they could lose everything because they get sick? Or we've got little children and families going to the emergency room once a week because they've got asthma and other preventable

diseases, because their families aren't linked up with a primary care physician who is providing them regular care? Where the costs to society for reduced productivity, illnesses, et cetera, all burden our businesses? Is that the kind of society we aspire to?

And I think the answer is no. And the notion that we would resist, or at least some would resist as fiercely as they would—or as they have, make this their number-one agenda, is perpetuating a system in which millions of people across the country, hard-working Americans don't have access to health care, I think, is wrong.

Former President Clinton. The—we have to close. But I will close with a story. I told you all this morning that the employee that our health access program lost in the Kenyan mall shooting was a Dutch nurse. And I spend—we spend a lot of time in the Netherlands. They—we get a lot of support there. Oxi is one of the biggest insurance companies in Europe. They're one of our partners here. I went to celebrate their 200th anniversary with them. They had been—they started as a fire insurance company with 39 farmers, 200 years ago.

And we were out there in this big farm field with a—in a tent in the shadow of a 13th-century church and a big Dutch windmill. And I asked the chairman of the company, I said, do you write health insurance? Because in the Netherlands there's no Medicare and no Medicaid, everybody is on an individual mandate, and you just subsidize people based on their incomes.

He said, yes, I write it; we all do. And he looked at me, and he said, but we don't make any money on it. And he said, we shouldn't. This guy is running a huge insurance—can you imagine somebody saying that in America? [*Laughter*] He said, we shouldn't. If I can't make money on this business doing traditional insurance business, I've got no business in the work. He said, look, health care is a public good, and you've got to find a way to finance it for everybody. And he said, it's just an intermediary function that somebody has to handle. But in the end, it's how it's delivered, how it's priced, and how healthy you can keep your people.

So the First Lady is trying to keep us all healthier, and you're trying to change the delivery and the pricing. And you have to cover everybody to do it. I think this is a big step forward for America. This will, over the next decade, not only make us healthier, but it will free up in the private sector largely funds that can then be reinvested in other areas of economic growth and give us a much more well-balanced economy. But first, we've got to get everybody to sign up.

President Obama. Everybody, sign up. Go to healthcare.gov. Thank you very much.

Former President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:02 p.m. in the Metropolitan Ballroom of the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mickey D. Beebe of Arkansas; Gov. Steven L. Beshear of Kentucky; Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter of Idaho; Carrie Banahan, executive director, Kentucky's Healthcare Connection; Amy Dowd, director, Your Health Idaho; and former President George W. Bush. Former President Clinton referred to former President George W. Bush; and Elif Yavuz, senior vaccines researcher, Clinton Global Initiative, who was killed in the September 21 terrorist attack at the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City
September 24, 2013

Hello, everybody. Hello, hello, hello! Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you. Well, now, first of all, I had a chance to take pictures with everybody, and I have to say, this has to be one of the best looking crews I've ever been with.

I do admit that being upstaged by a magician is something that I try to avoid. [*Laughter*]

Somebody told me that the face-painting guy is coming in soon. [*Laughter*]

But it really is wonderful just to have a chance to be with families. And obviously, Malia and Sasha are starting to get a little bit older, but I still remember when they were this huggable. [*Laughter*] And I got a couple hugs from some of you, so I very much appreciate that. That made me feel good.

We've got some special guests here today. First of all, your next mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio is here. We are thrilled with Bill. His son Dante, who has the same hairdo I had back in 1978—[*laughter*]—although I have to confess, my Afro was never that good. [*Laughter*] It was a little unbalanced.

But we could not be prouder of the campaign Bill ran, the way he gave voice to the values that make us Democrats. And we are confident that he is going to continue to move New York in a direction where everybody has a chance to get ahead. And so we're very proud of him and look forward to seeing him do a great job as the mayor of New York City.

We also have here your outstanding Representative: Carolyn Maloney is here. So give Carolyn a big round of applause. And all of you are here.

Now, some of you may be aware, I gave a really long speech at the U.N. today, so I'm going to keep my remarks fairly brief; also because some of you said you still had homework to do and were trying to get me to sign a note excusing you—[*laughter*]—but we think you will get home in time to do your homework.

We live in such a challenging time. Internationally, we have crises like Syria, the challenge of making sure that Iran's nuclear program is not weaponized in a way that threatens the region. Here, domestically, at home, although we're now growing again, we've got a lot of people out there who are having trouble finding work, are having difficulty making ends meet. We have environmental challenges that we're concerned about for the next generation. We continue to battle on behalf of equality for all people.

And so sometimes, I think people tend to feel a little overwhelmed by what they read in the newspapers—except he doesn't feel overwhelmed at all. [*Laughter*] He's fine because he had some candy and is going to be up really late tonight. Yay! [*Laughter*]

But the good news is that when you look at the country and the direction we're moving in, what you see is a country that's becoming more tolerant, a country that's becoming more inclusive, a country that understands there's no contradiction between growing the economy and conserving this planet for the next generation. We see a nation that in a few weeks is finally going to be in a position to make sure that every single person in America can get affordable health care when they need it.

What you see is people all across the country from every walk of life who believe in this country deeply and understand that the contributions they make every day in working hard, looking after their families, treating people with respect, giving back to their community, volunteering in their places of worship, that that's what perfects our Union over time; that it's not always flashy, but it's making a difference each and every day.

And sometimes, people ask me: "How come you don't get more discouraged with some of the nonsense you see out of Washington? And other than you getting gray hair, you seem like you're okay." [*Laughter*] And the reason is, is because I get a chance to see all of you and I see your families and I see your contributions, and I know why I fight for the things I fight for. Because I want to make sure that the values that all of you stand for and that you're passing on to your kids, that those are the values that this whole country lives by.

But I can't do it alone. The truth is, is that we could be doing a lot more. The country could be growing faster. We could be putting more people to work. We could be rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure. We could be putting in place early childhood education for every family in America. We could be cutting our deficits in sensible ways, not in ways that impede our growth. We could be caring for those who are vulnerable. We could be opening up more opportunity. We could be doing so much more if we had a

Congress that was focused on you and not focused on politics day to day.

And the only way that is going to happen is if we've got a strong DNC and if we are able to get our message out at a time when folks who want to look backwards and roll back the clock and don't really have a lot of regard for people who are struggling, if we're able to counteract their message with a message of hope.

We can't beat a message of fear if that message isn't delivered, if it's not projected, if it's not reaching people. And at a time when folks naturally feel cynical about Washington and politics and the possibilities of change, the only way that we're going to battle back against that kind of cynicism is if all of you get involved. And that's what you're doing here today.

So I am thankful to all of you. I intend to work as hard as I can to make sure that we're doing everything we can on behalf of working families and building a middle class, but I'm also going to be working as hard as I can to make sure that we have a Congress that is able, in my last 2 years as President, to get as much done as we got done in our first 2 years and making sure that America is the country that we all know it can be.

So God bless all of you. Thanks for showing up. Appreciate it. Remember to do your homework, those of you who didn't do it. All right? Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:11 p.m. in the John Jacob Astor Salon of the Waldorf Astoria New York hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Democratic mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Prince George's Community College in Largo, Maryland
September 26, 2013

The President. Hello, Maryland! Hello, PGCC! Well, it's good to be back in PG County.

Give it up for one of the hardest working, most effective Governors in the country, Governor Martin O'Malley.

Well, it is great to be with all of you here today——

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. It's wonderful being here. Wonderful.

We also have a few folks who work so hard on behalf of the people of Maryland every single day: Senator Ben Cardin is here, Congressman Steny Hoyer is here, and Congresswoman Donna Edwards is here.

And all of you are here. Sometimes, you just need to escape Beltway politics for a little bit, even if you're just a mile or two outside the Beltway.

Now, I know that a lot of you have seen some of the antics going on in Congress right now. [*Laughter*] So I wanted to take a little bit of time today to speak with you—the people who send us to serve—about something that is critical to our families, critical to our businesses, critical to our economy. And that is the reforms that we are making to our health care system.

There's been a lot of things said, a lot of misinformation, a lot of confusion. But there are few things more fundamental to the economic security of the middle class and everybody who's trying to get into the middle class than health care.

For a long time, America was the only advanced economy in the world where health care was not a right, but a privilege. We spent more; we got less. We left tens of millions of Americans without the security of health insurance. By the time the financial crisis hit, most folks' premiums had more than doubled in about a decade. About 1 in 10 Americans who got their health care through their employer lost that coverage. So the health care system was not working. And the rising costs of health care burdened businesses and became the biggest driver of our long-term deficits.

But this has always been about more than just statistics. Everywhere I went as I ran for President back in 2007, 2008, everyplace I've gone as President, I would hear stories from folks just like you of insurers that denied a

child coverage because he had a preexisting condition like asthma, of cancer survivors that had to choose between their home or their health care, of small businesses who wanted to do the right thing by their employees, but had seen their insurance premiums go up so high that they just couldn't do it anymore.

And these stories were personal for me because I remember my mom worrying about how she was going to deal with her finances when she got very sick. I remember the fear Michelle and I felt when Sasha was a few months old and she got meningitis. And we raced to the hospital, and they had to give her a spinal tap. And we didn't know what was wrong, and we were terrified, never felt so scared or helpless in all of my life. But we were fortunate enough to have good health insurance.

And I remember looking around that emergency room and thinking, what about the parents who aren't that lucky? What about the parents who get hit with a bill of $20,000 or $30,000 and they've got no idea how to pay for it? What about those parents whose kids have a chronic illness like asthma and have to keep on going back to the emergency room because they don't have a regular doctor and the bills never stop coming? Who is going to stand up for them?

In the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one should go broke just because they get sick. In the United States of America, health care is not a privilege for the fortunate few, it is a right. And I knew that if we didn't do something about our unfair and inefficient health care system, it would keep driving up our deficits, it would keep burdening our businesses, it would keep hurting our families, and it would keep holding back economic growth.

That's why we took on a broken health care system. That's why, with the help of folks like Steny and Ben and Donna, we got it through Congress. That's why we've been implementing it. That's why we are going to see it through. The Affordable Care Act is here.

I don't have to tell you, it was a challenge to get it done. [*Laughter*] A lot of special interests who liked the system just the way it was fought us tooth and nail. Then Republicans decided it was good politics to fight it, even though the plan we proposed drew on a lot of Republican ideas.

But despite all the obstacles, the Affordable Care Act passed both Houses of Congress. I signed it into law. The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional. Republicans in Congress have now voted more than 40 times to undermine or repeal it. Their candidate for President ran on a platform to repeal it. And at every step, they've been unsuccessful.

Now, 5 days from now—5 days from now—on October 1, millions of Americans who don't have health insurance because they've been priced out of the market or because they've—denied access because of a preexisting condition, they will finally be able to buy quality, affordable health insurance. In 5 days.

Preexisting conditions, whether it's back pain or allergies that were sticking you with sky-high premiums, those no longer will prevent you from getting affordable coverage that you need. That's going to happen in 5 days.

Now, of course, the closer we've gotten to this date, the more irresponsible folks who are opposed to this law have become. Some of the same Republicans who warned 3 years ago that this law would be "Armageddon"—that's what they said, "Armageddon"—now they're threatening steps that actually would badly hurt our entire economy, not because of the Affordable Care Act, but because of what they're threatening to do.

Some have threatened a Government shutdown if they can't shut down this law. Others have actually threatened an economic shutdown by refusing to pay America's bills if they can't delay the law.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's not going to happen as long as I'm President. The Affordable Care Act is here to stay. And so today I want to speak plainly, clearly, honestly, about what it means for you and for the people you care about.

Now, let's start with the fact that even before the Affordable Care Act fully takes effect, about 85 percent of Americans already have health insurance, either through their job or

through Medicare or through the individual market. So if you're one of these folks, it's reasonable that you might worry whether health care reform is going to create changes that are a problem for you, especially when you're bombarded with all sorts of fearmongering.

So the first thing you need to know is this: If you already have health care, you don't have to do anything. In fact, for the past few years, since I signed the Affordable Care Act, a lot of you have been enjoying new benefits and protections that you didn't before even if you didn't know they were coming from Obamacare.

Let me just give you a few examples. Because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 100 million Americans have gotten free preventive care like mammograms and contraceptive care with no copays. Because of the Affordable Care Act, 3 million young adults under age 26 have gained coverage by staying on their parent's plan. Because of the Affordable Care Act, millions of seniors on Medicare have saved hundreds of dollars on their prescription medicine. They've been getting their prescription drugs cheaper.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, just this year, 8.5 million families actually got an average of a hundred dollars back from their insurance companies because the insurance companies spent too much on things like overhead and not enough on actual Medicare—medical care. Because of the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies can no longer put lifetime limits on the care your family needs or discriminate against children with preexisting conditions. And starting on January 1, they won't be able to charge women more for their insurance just because they're women. [*Applause*] That's a good thing.

So tens of millions of Americans are already better off because of the benefits and protections provided by the Affordable Care Act. Like I said, they may not know why that rebate check came in the mail. [*Laughter*] They may not notice that they're not having to copay for some preventive care that they received. But they're getting those benefits. That's already happening. That's already in place today. It's been going on for several years.

Those are the benefits of Obamacare, the law that Republicans want to repeal. Although it's interesting, when you ask Republicans whether they'd repeal the benefits I just mentioned, when you say to them, well, do you think it's the right thing to do to let young people stay on their parents' plans so they can keep insurance? Or do you want to prevent seniors from getting more discounts on their prescription drugs? Then, they'll say, no, no, no, we like those. Those things are okay. [*Laughter*] So they don't like Obamacare in theory, but some of the component parts, at least those that poll well, they don't mind.

But that's already in place. Now, here's the second thing you need to know. If you're one of over 40 million Americans who don't have health insurance—including hundreds of thousands of folks right here in Maryland—starting on Tuesday, 5 days from now, you'll finally have the same chance to buy quality, affordable health care as everybody else.

Audience member. Thanks, Mr. President!

The President. And I want to break this down for you. I want you to know exactly how it works. The major reason why people don't have health insurance is either they don't have a job; or they do have a job, but their employer doesn't offer health insurance; or they're self-employed. If you've ever tried to buy health insurance on your own, you know it is really, really expensive.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. It's even worse if you have a preexisting condition, and up to half of all Americans have a preexisting condition. See, the reason it's really expensive if you're buying it on your own is because you're not part of a big group, you're not part of a group plan. And what groups do is they spread risk between sick and healthy people, between older and younger people. And groups—because insurance companies want the business of groups; that's a lot of customers—they'll negotiate a better deal with a group than they will with an individual.

So if you're on your own, you're out there trying to negotiate with an insurance company, they're looking, and they're saying, well, you take it or leave it, I'm going to charge you a whole lot of money. And if you've got a preexisting condition, they'll say, we don't even want to insure you because we think you might get sick later on and we don't really want to pay, we just want to take in premiums.

So if you're not part of a group, you're either uninsurable, or you need to spend a small fortune on insurance that oftentimes is not very good. That's what's happening right now. The Affordable Care Act was designed to solve that problem. And here's how we do it.

Starting on Tuesday, every American can visit healthcare.gov to find out what's called the insurance marketplace for your State. Here in Maryland, I actually think it's called marylandhealthconnection.gov—marylandhealthconnection.gov. But if you go to healthcare.gov, you can look and they'll tell you where to go. They'll link to your State.

Now, this is real simple. It's a website where you can compare and purchase affordable health insurance plans side by side, the same way you shop for a plane ticket on Kayak—[*laughter*]—same way you shop for a TV on Amazon. You just go on, and you start looking, and here are all the options.

It's buying insurance on the private market, but because now you're part of a big group plan—right, everybody in Maryland is all logging in and taking a look at the prices—you've got new choices. Now you've got new competition, because insurers want your business. And that means you will have cheaper prices.

So you enter in some basic information about yourself, what level of coverage you're looking for. After that, you'll be presented with a list of quality, affordable plans that are available in your area. It will say clearly what each plan covers, what each plan costs. The price will be right there. It will be fully transparent.

Before this law, only a handful of States required insurance companies to offer you instant price quotes, but because of this law, insurers in all 50 States will have to offer you instant price quotes. And so if you've ever tried to buy insurance on your own, I promise you, this is a lot easier. It's like booking a hotel or a plane ticket.

And here's another thing about these new plans. If you're one of those folks who have a preexisting condition, these plans have to offer you coverage. They can't use your medical history to charge you more than anybody else. If you couldn't afford coverage for your child because he had asthma, he's covered. If you couldn't afford coverage because you were told heartburn was a preexisting condition, you're covered. [*Laughter*] If you're one of the 45 million Americans with a mental illness, you are covered.

If you're a young adult or entrepreneur striking out on your own, you're covered. If you're a young couple who previously had insurance that didn't include maternity benefits and now suddenly you need some maternity benefits, you're covered. If you lose your job and your health care with it, you're covered.

So all those things that would deny you coverage in the past, that were the cruelties of a broken health care system, on January 1, when these plans take effect——

Audience member. October 1!

The President. No, no, no, hold on. [*Laughter*] Hold on. I know what I'm talking about. You sign up starting on Tuesday. [*Laughter*] The plan will take effect on January 1. And when these plans take effect, all those things change forever.

Now, what about choice and cost? In States where the Federal Government helps run these marketplaces, the average American will have more than 50 different plans to choose from, with different levels of coverage. And because insurance companies are competing against one another for your business, a lot of Americans will pay significantly less for their insurance than they do now. Premiums are going to be different in different parts of the country, depending on how much coverage you buy. But 95 percent of uninsured Americans will see their premiums cost less than was expected. And many families, including more than two-thirds of all young adults who buy health care through these online marketplaces,

are also going to be eligible for tax credits that bring down the cost down even further.

So let me be specific. Right here in Maryland, average 25-year-old—have we got any 25-year-olds here? All right, so we've got a few. Some of you raised your hand, I'm not sure you're—[*laughter*]. All right.

Here in Maryland, average 25-year-old making $25,000 a year could end up getting covered for as little as $80 a month—$80 a month. Here in Maryland, a family of four making $60,000 a year could get covered for as little as $164 a month.

It's the same story across the country. In Texas, average 27-year-old making $25,000 could get covered for as little as $83 a month. In Florida, a family of four making $50,000 could get covered for as little as $104 a month.

And keep in mind the Government didn't set these prices. The insurance companies, they proposed these prices because they want to get in with these big groups, with all these new customers. The insurance companies are saying these marketplaces, this law, will work. They're putting money on the line because they think it will work. Competition, choice, transparency—all these things are keeping costs down.

Now, knowing you can offer your family the security of health care, that's priceless. Now you can do it for the cost of your cable bill, probably less than your cell phone bill. [*Laughter*] Think about that. Good health insurance for the price of your cell phone bill or less.

And let's say you're a young woman, you just turned—I'm interested in this, because I've got two daughters, right? Let's say you just turned 26. Let's say you can't stay on your parent's plan anymore. If you buy health care through the marketplace, your plan has to cover free checkups, flu shots, contraceptive care. So you might end up getting more health care each month than you're paying for the premiums.

All told, nearly 6 in 10 Americans without health insurance today will be able to get covered for a hundred dollars or less. It would actually be 8 in 10 if every Governor were working as hard as Governor O'Malley to make the Affordable Care Act work for their citizens.

Unfortunately, we've still got a few Republican Governors who are so opposed to the very idea of the law—or at least they're doing it for the politics—that they haven't lifted a finger to help cover more people. Some of them have actually tried to harm the law before it takes effect.

But a lot of Republican Governors are putting politics aside and doing the right thing. You've got—and they deserve congratulations for that. It wasn't easy for them. But you've got conservative Governors in Ohio, in Michigan, in Pennsylvania, and Arizona—about eight Republican Governors in all, they've decided to expand Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act to cover more people in their States. And millions of Americans without insurance will get coverage through these programs.

So that's what the Affordable Care Act is. That's what all the fuss is about. We're giving more benefits and protections for folks who already have health insurance, and we created a new market—basically, a big group plan—for folks without health insurance so that they get a better deal, and then we're providing tax credits to help folks afford it.

You would think that would not be so controversial. [*Laughter*] You would think people would say, okay, let's go ahead and let's do this so everybody has health insurance coverage. The result is more choice, more competition, real health care security.

And one question people ask: How is it possible to do all this and keep costs down? Well, part of what we did was build into the law all sorts of measures to assure that the growth of health care costs would start slowing down. And it has. See, under the old system, doctors and hospitals, they were rewarded not for the quality of care, but for the quantity of care. They'd get paid for the number of procedures they did instead of whether they were working or not. Now there are penalties for hospitals with high readmission rates. And last year, surprisingly enough, for the first time ever, hospital readmission rates for Medicare patients actually fell. Right? That means fewer taxpayer

dollars go to providers that don't serve their patients well.

Over the past 5 years, we've more than doubled the adoption of electronic health records for physicians. So that means they can track what's going on better and make fewer mistakes. New technology startup companies are coming up with new inventions to monitor patient health, prevent infections. There's innovation going on all across the country. As a consequence, today, Medicare costs per enrollee are rising at the slowest rate in years. Employer-based health care costs are growing at about one-third the rate of a decade ago.

All told, since I signed the Affordable Care Act into law, we have seen the slowest growth in health care costs on record.

All right, so let's think about this. If you've got health insurance, you're getting better protections, better benefits. If you don't have health insurance, you're now getting to be part of a group plan. And health care costs overall are rising much more slowly than they did before we signed the law. So far, so good. So what's all the fuss about? What is it that everybody—what is that these Republicans are just so mad about?

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, look, I want to be honest. There are parts of the bill that some folks don't like. To help pay for the program, the wealthiest Americans—families who make more than $250,000 a year—will have to pay a little bit more. Extremely costly health insurance plans will no longer qualify for unlimited tax breaks. And most people who can afford health insurance now have to take responsibility to buy health insurance or pay a penalty.

Right? Now, the reason we do that is, when uninsured people who can afford to get health insurance don't, and then they get sick or they get hit by a car, and they show up at the emergency room, who do you think pays for that?

Audience members. We do.

The President. You do, in the form of higher premiums. Because the hospitals, they've got to get their money back somehow. So if they're treating somebody who doesn't have health insurance, they jack up premiums for everybody who does have health insurance. It's like a hidden tax of a thousand dollars per family every year who has got health insurance. So we're saying, well, that's not fair. If you can afford to get health insurance, don't dump the costs on us. The law also requires employers with more than 50 employees to either provide health insurance for your workers or pay a penalty.

Now, some folks say, well, that's not fair. But if you are an employer, you can afford to provide health insurance, you don't, your employees get sick, they go to the emergency room or they end up on Medicaid because you're not doing what you're doing—you should be doing, why is it everybody else should be bearing those costs?

Now, there are some folks who disagree with me on this. They say that violates people's liberty, telling them they've got to get health insurance. Well, I disagree. So did Congress when it passed this bill into law. It is unfair for folks to game the system and make the rest of us pay for it. It's unfair for responsible employers who are doing the right thing, giving their employees health insurance, to get undercut by some operator that's not providing health insurance for their employees. That puts the employer who's doing the right thing at a disadvantage, right?

So this idea that you've got responsibilities—everybody—that's what Massachusetts did when they passed their health care plan a few years ago. And by the way, today, in Massachusetts, almost everybody is covered, and the system works pretty well. So—[*applause*].

All right, let me just wrap up by saying this: Like any law, like any big product launch, there are going to be some glitches as this thing unfolds. Folks in different parts of the country will have different experiences. It's going to be smoother in places like Maryland where Governors are working to implement it rather than fight it. But somewhere around the country, there's going to be a computer glitch, and the website's not working quite the way it's supposed to, or something happens where there's some error made somewhere; that will happen. That happens whenever you roll out a new program. And I guarantee you, the

opponents of the law, they'll have their cameras ready to document anything that doesn't go completely right, and they'll send it to the news folks, and they'll say, look at this, this thing's not working.

But most of the stories you'll hear about how Obamacare just can't work, it's just not based on facts. Every time they have predicted something not working, it's worked. I mean, they said that these rates would come in real high and everybody's premiums would be sky high. And it turns out, lo and behold, actually, the prices came in lower than we expected, lower than I predicted. That's how well competition and choice work.

They said this would be a disaster in terms of jobs. There's no widespread evidence that the Affordable Care Act is hurting jobs. One of John McCain's former economic advisers admitted just this week—and I'm quoting here—"I was expecting to see it. I was looking for it," but "it's not there." It's not there.

So the reason is reforming health care is going to help the economy over the long term. Not only will it help lower costs for businesses, not only will it help families, it will free up entrepreneurship in this country. Because if you've got a great idea for your own business, but you've never tried it because your spouse had a preexisting condition and you didn't want to lose your employer-based coverage, you've got the ability now to get your own coverage. That's security. That's freedom.

So we're now only 5 days away from finishing the job.

Audience member. Five days away.

The President. Five days. Starting on Tuesday, you can sign up. But you don't have to sign up on Tuesday; you've got 6 months to enroll in these new plans. You can go to the website; you can check it out; you can see if what I'm saying is true. [*Laughter*] You can sign up next week. You can sign up next month. You can sign up 2 months from now, 3 months from now. But you can sign up.

Tell your friends, tell your classmates, tell your family members about the new health care choices. Talk to folks at your church, in your classroom. You're going to a football game, basketball game, talk to them. Tell them what the law means.

And over the next few months, State and local leaders from across the country are going to hold events to help get the word out. Go out there and join them. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius is in Texas right now, working with folks on the ground to make sure this law works for Texas families. All across the country, people are getting ready. All kinds of people are working hand in hand because we're all in this together. That's when America is at its best. That's what this country is all about.

But we need you to spread the word. But you don't have to take my word for it. If you talk to somebody who says, well, I don't know, I was watching Fox News, and they said this was horrible—[*laughter*]—you can say, you know what, don't take my word for it, go on the website. See for yourself what the prices are, see for yourself what the choices are, then make up your own mind.

Just make—that's all I'm asking. Make up your own mind. I promise you, if you go on the website and it turns out you're going to save $100, $200, $300 a month on your insurance, or you'll be able to buy insurance for the first time, even if you didn't vote for me—[*laughter*]—I'll bet you'll sign up for that health care plan.

So you don't need to listen to the politicians. You don't need to listen to me. Just go check it out for yourself. Make up your own mind whether this works for you.

And part of—look, part of the reason I need your help to make this law work is because there are so many people out there working to make it fail. One of the biggest newspapers in the country recently published an editorial, I thought, was pretty good. They said, the Republicans in Congress are poisoning Obamacare, then trying to claim it's sick. [*Laughter*] That's exactly what's been happening.

I mean, they have tried to put up every conceivable roadblock. They cut funding for efforts to educate people about what's in the law. Some of them said if their constituents called them, we won't even try to explain to them what's in the law. They actually opened up an

investigation into people who try to help churches and charities understand how to help people sign up for the law.

Some of the Tea Party's biggest donors—some of the wealthiest men in America—are funding a cynical ad campaign trying to convince young people not to buy health care at all. I mean, think about it. These are billionaires several times over. You know they've got good health care.

Audience members. Right!

The President. But they are actually spending money on television, trying to convince young people that if you've got the choice between getting affordable health care or going without health care, you should choose not having any health care. Now, do you think if you get sick or you get hurt and you get stuck with a massive bill, these same folks, they're going to help you out?

Audience members. No!

The President. Are they going to pay for your health care?

Audience members. No!

The President. It is interesting, though, how over the last couple years, I'm—the Republican Party has just spun itself up around this issue. And the fact is the Republicans' biggest fear at this point is not that the Affordable Care Act will fail. What they're worried about is, it's going to succeed. I mean, think about it: If it was as bad as they said it was going to be, then they could just go ahead and let it happen, and then everybody would hate it so much, and then everybody would vote to repeal it, and that would be the end of it.

So what is it that they're so scared about?

Audience member. You!

The President. [*Laughter*] They have made such a big political issue out of this, trying to scare everybody with lies about "death panels" and "killing granny"—[*laughter*]—right? I mean that's—"Armageddon." So if it actually works, they'll look pretty bad. If it actually works, that will mean that everything they were saying really wasn't true and they were just playing politics.

Audience members. That's right!

The President. Just the other day, one Republican in Congress said we need to shut this thing down before the marketplaces open and people get to see that they'll be getting coverage and getting these subsidies because—and I'm going to quote him here—he said, "It's going to prove almost impossible to undo Obamacare." [*Laughter*] Right? So, in other words, we've got to shut this thing down before people find out that they like it. [*Laughter*] That's a strange argument. Don't you think that's a strange argument?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And the closer we get, the more desperate they get. I mean, over the last few weeks, the rhetoric has just been cranked up to a place I've never seen before. One Congressman said that Obamacare is "the most dangerous piece of legislation ever passed." [*Laughter*] Ever. In the history of America, this is the most dangerous piece of legislation. [*Laughter*] Providing—creating a marketplace so people can buy group insurance plans, the most dangerous ever.

You had a State representative somewhere say that it's "as destructive to personal and individual liberty as the Fugitive Slave Act."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Think about that. Affordable health care is worse than a law that let slave owners get their runaway slaves back.

Audience members. No!

The President. I mean, these are quotes. I'm not making this stuff up. And here's one more that I've heard. I like this one: "We have to"—and I'm quoting here—"We have to repeal this failure before it literally kills women, kills children, kills senior citizens." Now, I have to say—that one was from 6 months ago—I just want to point out we still have women—[*laughter*]—we still have children, we still have senior citizens.

All this would be funny if it wasn't so crazy. And a lot of it is just hot air. A lot of it is just politics. I understand that. But now the Tea Party Republicans have taken it to a whole new level, because they're threatening either to shut down the Government or shut down the entire economy by refusing to let America pay

its bills for the first time in history unless I agree to gut a law that will help millions of people.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Think about this. Shutting down the Government just because you don't like a law that was passed and found constitutional and because you don't like the idea of giving people new access to affordable health care, what kind of idea is that?

I mean, think about how that would impact Maryland. This is an area where lots of people would be badly hurt by a Government shutdown. A lot of people around here wake up and go to serve their country every single day in the Federal Government: civilians who work at military bases, analysts, scientists, janitors, people who process new veterans' and survivors' benefit claims. They'd all have to stay home and not get paid. And it—we all know it would badly damage the economy.

I mean, whatever effect Obamacare might have on the economy is far less than even a few days of Government shutdown. I mean, even if you believed that Obamacare somehow was going to hurt the economy, it won't hurt the economy as bad as a Government shutdown. And by the way, the evidence is that it's not going to hurt the economy. Obamacare is going to help the economy. And it's going to help families and help businesses.

As for not letting America pay its bills, I have to say, no Congress before this one has ever—ever—in history been irresponsible enough to threaten default, to threaten an economic shutdown, to suggest America not pay its bills, just to try to blackmail a President into giving them some concessions on issues that have nothing to do with a budget.

I mean, this is the United States of America. We're not a deadbeat nation. We don't run out on our tab. We don't not pay our note. We are the world's bedrock economy, the world's currency of choice. The entire world looks to us to make sure that the world economy is stable. You don't mess with that. [*Applause*] You don't mess with that.

And that's why I will not negotiate on anything when it comes to the full faith and credit of the United States of America.

We're not going to submit to this kind of total irresponsibility. Congress needs to pay our bills on time. Congress needs to pass a budget on time. Congress needs to put an end to governing from crisis to crisis. Our focus as a country should be on creating new jobs and growing our economy and helping young people learn and restoring security for hard-working, middle class families.

This is not about the fortunes of any one party. This is not about politics. This is about the future of our country. If Republicans do not like the law, they can go through the regular channels and processes to try to change it. That's why we have elections. So they can go through the normal processes and procedures of a democracy, but you do not threaten the full faith and credit of the United States of America.

And meanwhile, we're going to keep implementing the law.

Audience member. It's the law!

The President. It's the law. And like I said, there are going to be some glitches along the way. Every law has hiccups when it's first starting off. People forget, by the way, Medicare Part D—passed by my predecessor, George Bush, passed by a Republican House of Representatives—the prescription drug bill passed into law 10 years ago was even more unpopular than the Affordable Care Act before it took into effect. Everybody was saying what a disaster it was going to be. The difference was Democrats worked with Republicans to make it work even better. Steny remembers this. Even though Democrats weren't happy that the law wasn't paid for and was going to add hundreds of billions of dollars to the deficit and we weren't negotiating a better deal with the drug companies, everybody worked—once it was the law—to try to make it work. And today, about 90 percent of seniors like their prescription drug coverage.

So we may not get that same level of cooperation from Republicans right now. But the good news is, I believe eventually they'll come

around. Because Medicare and Social Security faced the same kind of criticism. Before Medicare came into law, one Republican warned that "one of these days, you and I are going to spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it once was like in America when men were free." That was Ronald Reagan. And eventually, Ronald Reagan came around to Medicare and thought it was pretty good and actually helped make it better.

So that's what's going to happen with the Affordable Care Act. And once it's working really well, I guarantee you, they will not call it Obamacare. [*Laughter*]

Here is a prediction for you: A few years from now, when people are using this to get coverage and everybody is feeling pretty good about all the choices and competition that they've got, there are going to be a whole bunch of folks who say, yes, I always thought this provision was excellent. [*Laughter*] I voted for that thing. You watch. [*Laughter*] It will not be called Obamacare. [*Laughter*]

But I'm always willing to work with anybody from either party. If you've got a serious idea for making the Affordable Care Act better or making our broader health care system better, I'm happy to work with you, because that's what the majority of the American people want. They don't want posturing, they want governing. They don't want politics, they want us to work together to make the lives of ordinary Americans a little bit better, a little bit more secure.

So, Maryland, I'm asking for your help. I need your help. We may have some very well-funded opponents. We may have some very talkative opponents. But you're going to be the best, most credible messengers to spread the word about this law and all the benefits that the American people stand to get and have earned.

So tell your friends, tell your family. Get covered. Get on that website. Answer the questions of folks who don't know what this is all about. Point them to healthcare.gov. Teach them how to use the website. Make sure they sign up. Let's help our fellow Americans get covered.

Then, let's keep on working to rebuild the middle class. Let's go and focus on creating more good-paying jobs. Let's build more ladders of opportunity for everybody willing to work hard. Let's make sure the United States of America keeps being a place where you can make it if you try.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Novak Field House. In his remarks, he referred to 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; Gov. John R. Kasich of Ohio; Gov. Richard D. Snyder of Michigan; Gov. Thomas W. Corbett, Jr., of Pennsylvania; Gov. Janice K. Brewer of Arizona; Mark M. Zandi, chief economist, Moody's Analytics, in his capacity as economic adviser to 2008 Republican Presidential nominee Sen. John S. McCain III; Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz; Rep. John C. Fleming, Jr.; and State Rep. William L. O'Brien of New Hampshire.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

September 27, 2013

Syria

The President. Well, I've asked for Prime Minister Singh's indulgence to begin my remarks on the issue of Syria. As many of you are now aware, yesterday the United States and Russia were able to hammer out an agreement, partnering with the other members of the P–5 and the Security Council, around Syria eliminating its chemical weapons and ultimately having them destroyed by the international community.

This is something that we have long sought. And the fact that we now have a framework

that will be voted on, perhaps as soon as today, perhaps over the weekend or Monday, that would be legally binding, that would be verifiable and enforceable, where there would be consequences for Syria's failure to meet what has been set forth in this resolution, I think is a potentially huge victory for the international community.

Realistically, it's doubtful that we would have arrived at this point had it not been for a credible threat of U.S. action in the aftermath of the horrific tragedy that took place on August 21, where chemical weapons killed over a thousand people, including more than 400 children. But I've always expressed a preference for resolving this diplomatically, and I appreciate all our international partners in working very hard over the past several days to make sure that we could arrive at a resolution that not only deters and prevents additional chemical use, but actually goes beyond what could have been accomplished through any military action, and that is the removal of chemical weapons—one of the largest stockpiles in the world—from Syria so that they can actually be destroyed.

I think it's also worth noting that in the Security Council resolution, there is an explicit endorsement of the Geneva I process to try to deal with the underlying conflict in Syria and the need for a political transition there that can bring about peace and allow the millions of people who've been displaced and harmed by this conflict to return to their homes and try to rebuild their lives and to rebuild a country that's been shattered now by civil war.

So we are very hopeful about the prospects for what can be accomplished, but obviously, there is a lot of work to be done. I think rightly, people have been concerned about whether Syria will follow through on the commitments that have been laid forth, and I think there are legitimate concerns as to how, technically, we are going to be getting those chemical weapons out while there's still fighting going on on the ground.

Nevertheless, this represents potentially a significant step forward and, I think, indicates what I had hoped for when I spoke at the United Nations just this week: that we have an international community that is not just gathering to talk, but also is able to take concerted action on behalf of enforcing international norms and preserving everybody's security, including those in the region and obviously the people of Syria themselves.

India-U.S. Relations

Now, I also want to say how glad I am to have Prime Minister Singh here today. He has been a great friend and partner to the United States and to me personally during his tenure as Prime Minister of India. And I think all of us recognize that as the world's two largest democracies, countries that have for a very long time been invested in the peace and prosperity of their own people, that there is a natural convergence between the United States and India. Part of that has to do with the incredible people-to-people ties that exist. Indian Americans make extraordinary contributions to the United States every single day—businessmen, scientists, academics. Now Miss America is of Indian American descent, and I think it's a signal of how close our countries are.

And what we've been able to do during the time that I've been President and certainly preceding me throughout Prime Minister Singh's tenure, is to try to make sure that our Government-to-Government cooperation matches the great affection and affinity that exists between the Indian and American peoples.

We've made enormous progress on the issue of civilian nuclear power and, in fact, have been able to achieve just in the last few days an agreement on the first commercial agreement between a U.S. company and India on civilian nuclear power.

We have a wide-ranging security cooperation in battling terrorism and something that Prime Minister Singh obviously is deeply concerned about, given the impact of terrorism on India. All of us remember the horrible events that took place in Mumbai, but as recently as the last few days, India continues to suffer from terrorist attacks. And our hearts go out to the families that have been impacted.

We have enormous commercial ties between our two countries. And in fact, bilateral trade between our two countries has gone up by 50 percent just over the last several years, indicating the degree of progress that has been made. And India, as a significant not just regional power, but world power, has worked closely with us on a whole range of issues, from climate change to how we can help feed the world, alleviate poverty, and deal with disease.

We also had an opportunity to discuss the tensions that continue to exist in the subcontinent. We both have a shared interest in making sure that Afghanistan continues on its path to a peaceful, democratic country, and both share an interest in making sure that we help Afghans stand up for the rights of all groups inside of Afghanistan, that the rights of women and minority groups are protected, and that the upcoming election happens in a way that maintains and continues to strengthen stability in that troubled country.

And we had a chance to discuss Pakistan and our shared interest in seeing a peaceful reduction of tensions on the subcontinent, and we want to very much thank Prime Minister Singh for what has been a consistent interest in improving cooperation between India and Pakistan.

So, across the board, Prime Minister Singh has been an outstanding partner. India continues to grow at a amazing rate, but as Prime Minister Singh indicates, obviously, there are a lot of people in India that are still trapped in poverty. His primary priority has been to alleviate that poverty and give all the people of India opportunity. And we want to make sure that we're strong partners in helping him to realize that vision, because we believe that if there's a strong India, that that's good for the world and it's ultimately good for the United States of America.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. And thank you so much for all your efforts to continue to strengthen ties between our two countries.

Prime Minister Singh. Mr. President, there is very little that I can add to your eloquent statement. I've always believed that India and America are indispensable partners. And during the time that I have been Prime Minister and particularly during the time that President Obama and I have worked together, I think President Obama has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening, widening, and deepening of our cooperation in diverse fields.

When I came to America in 2005, in addressing the United States Congress, I said there are partnerships based on principles and partnerships based on pragmatism. And I then said that in the case of Indo-American cooperation, both principles of our commitment to democracy, shared values, rule of law, and pragmatism both combine to make us strong, durable partners. And I'm very happy to say that in the last 5 years that I have worked together with President Obama, that process has strengthened in every possible way.

India and America are working together to give our cooperation a new sense of purpose, widening and deepening in diverse directions. We are cooperating in expanding the frontiers of trade, investment, and technology. Our bilateral trade today is $100 billion. American investments in India are $80 billion. And they are growing despite the slowdown in the global economy.

And outside the area of trade, technology, and investment, we are exploring avenues of cooperation in new areas—new areas like energy cooperation, clean coal technologies, energy-efficient technologies, cooperation in the field of environment, cooperation in the field of defense and security related, cooperation with regard to intelligence gathering and counterterrorism. In all these areas, India needs the United States to be standing by our side. And I am very pleased to note that President Obama has imparted a powerful impetus to that process of our two countries being on the same page.

The President briefed me about his initiatives both with regard to Syria and with regard to Iran, and I complimented him for his vision, for his courage in giving diplomacy yet another chance. India fully supports these initiatives because 6 million Indians live in West Asia and the Middle East. They earn their livelihood

there, which is an important part of sustaining our values of freedom. Therefore, anything that contributes to peace and stability in the Middle East, in Iran, in Syria, is something which is in the interests of the global economy; it is certainly in the interest of people in the region in which I and India is placed.

We also discussed our relations and our approach to dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan. I explained to President Obama the difficulties that we face given the fact that the epicenter of terror still remains focused in Pakistan. And I look forward to meeting with President Nawaz Sharif, even though the expectations have to be toned down given the terror arm which is still active in our subcontinent.

Overall, I have come here to thank President Obama for all that he has done to strengthen, to widen and deepen cooperation between our two countries. I explained to the President that India is a poor country. Our basic task is to improve the standard of living of our people, to get rid of mass poverty, ignorance, and disease, which still afflict millions and millions of our people. And in that struggle, we want America to stand by our side. And in the President, the United States has a leader who realizes and recognizes the contribution that a resurgent India can make not only to fighting poverty, but also to global peace and prosperity.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nina Davuluri, winner of the 2014 Miss America pageant. Prime Minister Singh referred to Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

September 27, 2013

The Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh and the President of the United States of America Barack Obama met this morning followed by a working luncheon at the White House. Marking their third bilateral summit, the two Leaders reflected proudly on the transformation of United States-India relations during the last decade, affirming that the partnership between the two democratic nations is stronger today than at any point in its 67-year history.

Rooted in common democratic values and strong people-to-people ties, the United States and India have developed a comprehensive global strategic partnership, both in name and in substance, that has made their citizens safer and more prosperous.

President Obama and Prime Minister Singh pledged to make the next decade equally as transformative, challenging their governments to reach the full potential of this partnership, particularly in the areas of security cooperation, bilateral trade and investment, energy and environment, higher education, and global architecture.

The Leaders called for expanding security cooperation between the United States and India to address 21st century challenges in the areas of counter-terrorism, cyber, space, and global health security.

Applauding bilateral defense cooperation, including trade and military exercises, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved to date in defense relations. They emphasized the need for more intensive defense cooperation on both sides. The Leaders reaffirmed their desire to further strengthen defense trade cooperation, endorsing a Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation as a means of enhancing their partnership in defense technology transfer, joint research, co-development, and co-production. President Obama encouraged the further participation of U.S. firms in partnering India's efforts to enhance its defense capacities. President Obama also wel-

comed India's decision to participate in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise hosted by U.S. Pacific Command in 2014.

Affirming their deep concern over the continuing threat posed by terrorism, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh stressed the need for joint and concerted effort, including dismantling of terrorist safe havens, and disrupting all financial and tactical support for terrorism. The Leaders decided to significantly expand information sharing and intelligence cooperation to address threats to their respective nations, including strengthening the bilateral relationship to exchange information on known and suspected terrorists. The Leaders emphasized the importance of expanding homeland security cooperation to enhance exchanges on megacity policing strategies, securing the global supply chain and anti-counterfeiting efforts. India welcomed the U.S. offer of membership in the U.S. "Global Entry" Trusted Traveler Network Program, to facilitate expedited entry of Indian travelers to the United States.

Noting that two-way trade has increased fivefold since 2001 to nearly $100 billion, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh agreed that there are no insurmountable impediments to bilateral trade increasing an additional fivefold. President Obama expressed confidence that the ongoing Indian economic reforms and policy measures to liberalize India's economy would accelerate economic growth, opening greater avenues for trade and creating jobs in both countries. In this respect, the Leaders recognized in particular the role and contribution of the Indian and U.S. Information Technology (IT) industry and the IT enabled service industry in strengthening India-U.S. trade and investment relations.

The Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to concluding a high-standard Bilateral Investment Treaty that will foster openness to investment, transparency, and predictability, and thereby support economic growth and job creation in both countries. The Leaders welcomed progress toward increased engagement by experts from both governments, underlining the need for expeditious progress to address all trade and investment policy issues of bilateral concern so as to remove obstacles and improve the business environment in both countries. In this respect, both sides agreed to consider establishing a Joint Committee on Investment in Manufacturing.

The Leaders also committed their officials to work toward a successful outcome at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Bali.

The Leaders welcomed the robust cooperation in cutting-edge scientific research and joint collaboration in science, innovation, and entrepreneurship, for the benefit of citizens in both countries. The United States welcomed the invitation by India for the United States to be Partner Country in India's Science and Technology Summit in 2014.

President Obama and Prime Minister Singh discussed ways to strengthen bilateral efforts to promote energy efficiency, clean energy, and address climate change.

In the civil nuclear power sector, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh noted that, with government-to-government procedures agreed, commercial negotiations between U.S. companies and the Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) are proceeding. They welcomed the announcement that NPCIL and U.S. nuclear company Westinghouse have concluded a Preliminary Contract to develop a nuclear power plant in Gujarat in India. Building on this, the Leaders urged NPCIL and U.S. companies Westinghouse and General Electric-Hitachi to expedite the necessary work to establish nuclear power plants in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. Both sides reaffirm their commitment to the full and timely implementation of the India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.

The U.S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy (PACE), launched by the two Leaders in 2009, is expected to pave the way for energy to millions of Indian households. To expand the availability of clean energy resources to more people, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh endorsed the proposal to launch Promoting Energy Access through Clean Energy (PEACE), a PACE initiative, to

rapidly deploy innovative renewable energy solutions to those who currently lack access to energy.

Recognizing that climate change is a defining challenge of our time and that there are mutual benefits to intensifying cooperation, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh announced the establishment of an India-U.S. Climate Change Working Group to develop and advance action-oriented cooperation, as well as to begin an enhanced dialogue focusing on working closely in developing an ambitious climate change agreement for the post-2020 period, and on strengthening bilateral efforts in this regard.

The two leaders agreed to immediately convene the India-U.S. Task Force on hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) to discuss, inter alia, multilateral approaches that include using the expertise and the institutions of the Montreal Protocol to phase down the consumption and production of HFCs, based on economically viable and technically feasible alternatives, and include HFCs within the scope of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol for accounting and reporting of emissions.

The Leaders are committed to support the full implementation of the agreed outcomes under the UNFCCC with its ongoing negotiations. They strongly welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to mobilize political will through 2014 toward the successful adoption of a protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force under the convention applicable to all parties by 2015, during COP–21 that France stands ready to host. They also supported complementary initiatives, through multilateral approaches that include using the expertise and the institutions of the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and the consumption of HFCs, based on the examination of economically viable and technically feasible alternatives. They will continue to include HFCs within the scope of UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol for accounting and reporting of emissions.

President Obama and Prime Minister Singh emphasized the dangers that high oil prices can pose to the global economy and the need to increase oil market transparency and emergency response collaboration, through closer coordination and bilateral dialogue.

President Obama and Prime Minister Singh believe that the United States and India should look to each other as partners of first resort in addressing global challenges.

The Leaders reflected on the important strategic partnerships the United States and India have formed with Afghanistan, reaffirming their commitment to supporting a smooth security and political transition. The Leaders recognized that violent extremists continue to pose challenges to Afghanistan's security and stability and, in this context, emphasized the need for coordinated international support to help build the capacity of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. They noted that both India and the United States will remain committed to contribute to peace, stability, and development in Afghanistan during the critical transformation decade (2015–2024).

President Obama and Prime Minister Singh strongly condemned the September 26 terrorist attack in Samba in Jammu and Kashmir. They reiterated their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and reaffirmed their commitment to eliminating terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, and disrupting terrorist networks including Al-Qa'ida and the Lashkar-e-Taiba. The Leaders called for Pakistan to work toward bringing the perpetrators of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks to justice.

In the spirit of their continuing non-proliferation cooperation, the Leaders reviewed the close cooperation of the United States and India to realize India's intention of joining the multilateral export control regimes. The President reaffirmed the United States support for India's early membership in these groups. Looking ahead to the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague, India and the United States also will deepen their cooperation, including through the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding with India's Global Centre for

Nuclear Energy Partnership, to strengthen global nuclear security.

The Leaders stressed the need for diplomacy to resolve outstanding issues relating to Iran's nuclear program, and called on Iran to comply with its IAEA and UN Security Council obligations.

The two Leaders also deplored the use of chemical weapons in Syria, stressing that the global norm against the use of chemical weapons by anyone and anywhere must be maintained.

Consistent with the U.S. rebalance to Asia and India's Look East policy, the Leaders expressed a desire to partner more closely with other Asia-Pacific countries, including greater coordination with Japan, China and ASEAN, among others, including through the evolving institutional architecture of the region. The Leaders share a commitment to support regional multilateral institutions as they continue to develop into effective bodies built on international rules and norms that can address shared challenges.

Noting the contributions of Indian peacekeepers to global peace and stability for 60 years, the Leaders decided to expand their United Nations peacekeeping cooperation, including capacity-building efforts with third countries. Reaffirming that in the years ahead, the United States looks forward to a reformed UN Security Council with India as a permanent member, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh agreed that both their nations bear a responsibility to ensure that the Security Council continues to effectively play the role in maintaining international peace and security envisioned in the United Nations Charter.

Building on ongoing consultations between India and the United States on East Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia, and the trilateral dialogue mechanisms with Afghanistan and Japan respectively, the Leaders agreed to expand their consultations to include a dialogue on the Indian Ocean Region, to deepen coordination on cross-cutting issues including maritime security and conservation of natural resources.

The Leaders resolved to work together to end extreme poverty, including through expanding efforts to end preventable child deaths through the Child Survival Call to Action. Fifty years after the launch of India's own agricultural "Green Revolution," the Leaders applauded their countries' work together with African partners Kenya, Malawi, and Liberia to provide capacity building and exchange best practices for food security.

Looking forward, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh recognized that increased cooperation in these areas will strengthen the United States-India strategic partnership, highlighting shared democratic values and the capabilities the United States and India have to work together across Asia and around the globe. The two countries have crossed a threshold in their relations where both recognize that successes at home and abroad are further advanced by their cooperation.

Today's meeting demonstrates that the interests of the United States and India continue to converge, and this partnership will indeed be a defining one for the 21st century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement—United States-India Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation

September 27, 2013

India-United States defense cooperation and engagement has increased significantly over the past decade, in step with the overall deepening of India-U.S. relations. We continue to work toward achieving the full vision of expanded defense cooperation set forth in the 2005 New Framework Agreement.

In this context, India and the United States endorse the following general principles for fulfilling this vision:

- The United States and India share common security interests and place each other at the same level as their closest partners. This principle will apply with respect to defense technology transfer, trade, research, co-development and co-production for defense articles and services, including the most advanced and sophisticated technology. They will work to improve licensing processes, and, where applicable, follow expedited license approval processes to facilitate this cooperation. The United States and India are also committed to protecting each other's sensitive technology and information.
- The United States continues to fully support India's full membership in the four international export control regimes, which would further facilitate technology sharing.
- The two sides will continue their efforts to strengthen mutual understanding of their respective procurement systems and approval processes, and to address process-related difficulties in defense trade, technology transfer, and collaboration.

The two sides look forward to the identification of specific opportunities for cooperative and collaborative projects in advanced defense technologies and systems, within the next year. Such opportunities will be pursued by both sides in accordance with their national policies and procedures, in a manner that would reflect the full potential of the relationship.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
September 27, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Before I discuss the situation in Congress, let me say a few things about two important opportunities in our foreign policy.

Iran

Just now I spoke on the phone with President Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The two of us discussed our ongoing efforts to reach an agreement over Iran's nuclear program. I reiterated to President Rouhani what I said in New York: While there will surely be important obstacles to moving forward and success is by no means guaranteed, I believe we can reach a comprehensive solution.

I've directed Secretary Kerry to continue pursuing this diplomatic effort with the Iranian Government. We had constructive discussions yesterday in New York with our partners, the European Union, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, together with the Iranian Foreign Minister. Going forward, President Rouhani and I have directed our teams to continue working expeditiously, in cooperation with the P–5-plus-1, to pursue an agreement. And throughout this process, we'll stay in close touch with our friends and allies in the region, including Israel.

Now, we're mindful of all the challenges ahead. The very fact that this was the first communication between an American and Iranian President since 1979 underscores the deep mistrust between our countries, but it also indicates the prospect of moving beyond that difficult history.

I do believe that there is a basis for a resolution. Iran's Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons. President Rouhani has indicated that Iran will never develop nuclear weapons. I've made clear that we respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy in the context of Iran meeting its obligations. So the test will be meaningful, transparent, and verifiable actions, which can also bring relief from the comprehensive international sanctions that are currently in place.

Resolving this issue, obviously, could also serve as a major step forward in a new relationship between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect. It would also help facilitate a better relationship between Iran and the international community, as well as others in the region, one that would help the Iranian people fulfill their extraordinary potential, but also help us address other concerns that could bring greater peace and stability to the Middle East.

A path to a meaningful agreement will be difficult, and at this point, both sides have significant concerns that will have to be overcome. But I believe we've got a responsibility to pursue diplomacy and that we have a unique opportunity to make progress with the new leadership in Tehran. I also communicated to President Rouhani my deep respect for the Iranian people.

Syria

Now, as I said before, this comes on the same day that we can accomplish a major diplomatic breakthrough on Syria, as the United Nations Security Council will vote on a resolution that would require the Asad regime to put its chemical weapons under international control so they can ultimately be destroyed. This binding resolution will ensure that the Asad regime must keep its commitments or face consequences. We'll have to be vigilant about following through, but this could be a significant victory for the international community and demonstrate how strong diplomacy can allow us to secure our country and pursue a better world.

Federal Budget

Now, America's security and leadership don't just depend on our military strength or our alliances or our diplomacy. First and foremost, America's strength depends on a strong economy where our middle class is growing and everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead. So let me say a few words about the situation that's developed over the past few weeks on Capitol Hill.

Here at home, the United States Congress has two pressing responsibilities: pass a budget on time and pay our bills on time.

If Congress chooses not to pass a budget by Monday—the end of the fiscal year—they will shut down the Government, along with many vital services that the American people depend on. The good news is, within the past couple of hours, the United States Senate, Democrats and Republicans, acted responsibly by voting to keep our Government open and delivering the services the American people expect. Now it's up to Republicans in the House of Representatives to do the same. I say that because obviously Democrats have a great interest in making sure that these vital services continue to help the American people.

So far, the Republicans in the House of Representatives have refused to move forward. And here's the thing: Unlike the last time they threatened this course of action, this debate isn't really about deficits. In fact, our deficits are falling at the fastest pace that they have in 60 years. By the end of this year, we will have cut our deficits by more than half since I took office. So that's not what this is about. And in fact, if you've been following the discussion, the Republicans in the House don't even make a pretense that that's what this is about.

Instead, the House Republicans are so concerned with appeasing the Tea Party that they've threatened a Government shutdown or worse unless I gut or repeal the Affordable Care Act.

I said this yesterday; let me repeat it: That's not going to happen. More than a hundred million Americans currently, already have new benefits and protections under the law. On Tuesday, about 40 million more Americans will be able to finally buy quality, affordable health care, just like anybody else. Those marketplaces will be open for business on Tuesday no matter what, even if there's a Government shutdown. That's a done deal.

As I've said before, if Republicans have specific ideas on how to genuinely improve the law, rather than gut it, rather than delay it,

rather than repeal it, I'm happy to work with them on that through the normal democratic processes. But that will not happen under the threat of a shutdown.

So, over the next 3 days, House Republicans will have to decide whether to join the Senate and keep the Government open or shut it down because they can't get their way on an issue that has nothing to do with the deficit.

I realize that a lot of what's taking place right now is political grandstanding. But this grandstanding has real effects on real people. If the Government shuts down on Tuesday, military personnel, including those risking their lives overseas for us right now, will not get paid on time. Federal loans for rural communities—small-business owners, families buying a home—will be frozen. I'm already starting to get letters from people worried that this will have an impact on them directly. Critical research into lifesaving discoveries will be immediately halted.

The Federal Government has a large role across the country and touches the lives of millions of people, and those people will be harmed. And even the threat of a shutdown already is probably having a dampening effect on our economy; we saw that the last time these kinds of shenanigans were happening up on Capitol Hill.

So to any Republican in Congress who's currently watching, I'd encourage you to think about who you're hurting. There are probably young people in your office right now who came to work for you, without much pay, because they believed that public service was noble. You're preparing to send them home without a paycheck. You've got families with kids back in your districts who serve their country in the Federal Government, and now they might have to plan how they're going to get by if you shut the Government down.

Past shutdowns have disrupted the economy, and this shutdown would as well. It would throw a wrench into the gears of our economy at a time when those gears have gained some traction. And that's why many Republican Senators and many Republican Governors have urged Republicans to knock it off, pass a budget, and move on. Let's get this done.

Now, this brings me to Congress's second responsibility. Once they vote to keep the Government open, they also have to vote within the next couple of weeks to allow the Treasury to pay the bills for the money that Congress has already spent. I want to repeat: Raising the debt ceiling is simply authorizing the Treasury to pay for what Congress has already authorized.

Failure to meet this responsibility would be far more dangerous than a Government shutdown. It would effectively be an economic shutdown, with impacts not just here, but around the world. We don't fully understand what might happen, the dangers involved, because no Congress has ever actually threatened default. But we know it would have a profound destabilizing effect on the entire economy, on the world economy, because America is the bedrock of world investment. The dollar is the reserve currency. The debt that is issued by the Treasury is the foundation for our capital markets. That's why you don't fool with it.

Now, some Republicans have suggested that unless I agree to an even longer list of demands—not just gutting the health care law, but cutting taxes for millionaires or rolling back rules on big banks and polluters or other pet projects that they'd like to see and they've been trying to get passed over the last couple of years—that they would push the button, throw America into default for the first time in history, and risk throwing us back into a recession.

Now, I am willing to work with anybody who wants to have a serious conversation about our fiscal future. I've demonstrated that by putting forward serious reforms to tax and entitlement programs that would bring down our long-term deficits. I have said in the past—and I will continue to say—that I'm willing to make a whole bunch of tough decisions, ones that may not be entirely welcomed by my own party.

But we're not going to do this under the threat of blowing up the entire economy. I will not negotiate over Congress's responsibility to pay the bills that have already been racked up.

Voting for the Treasury to pay America's bills is not a concession to me. That's not doing me a favor. That's simply carrying out the solemn responsibilities that come with holding office up there. I don't know how I can be more clear about this. Nobody gets to threaten the full faith and credit of the United States just to extract political concessions. No one gets to hurt our economy and millions of innocent people just because there are a couple of laws that you do not like.

It has not been done in the past; we're not going to start doing it now. I'm not going to start setting a precedent—not just for me, but for future Presidents—where one Chamber in Congress can basically say, each time there needs to be a vote to make sure Treasury pays its bills, we're not going to sign it unless our particular hobbyhorse gets advanced.

Imagine if you had a Republican President and a Democratic Speaker, and the Democratic Speaker said, well, we're not going to pass a debt ceiling unless we raise corporate taxes by 40 percent or unless we pass background checks on guns or whatever other list of agenda items Democrats were interested in. Does anybody actually think that we would be hearing from Republicans that that was acceptable behavior?

That's not how our constitutional system is designed. We are not going to do it. The American people have worked too hard to recover from a bunch of crises—several of them now over the last couple of years inflicted by some of the same folks in Congress that we're talking about now—to see extremists in Congress cause another crisis.

And keep in mind, by the way, this whole thing has to do with keeping the Government open for a few months. The continuing resolution, the bill that's designed to avert a Government shutdown, basically just funds the Government for another couple months, so we could be doing this all over again. I'm sure the American people are thrilled about that.

And that's why we've got to break this cycle. My message to Congress is this. Do not shut down the Government. Do not shut down the economy. Pass a budget on time. Pay our bills on time. Refocus on the everyday concerns of the American people.

There will be differences between Democrats and Republicans. We can have all kinds of conversations about how to resolve those differences. There will be areas where we can work together. There will be areas where we disagree. But do not threaten to burn the house down simply because you haven't gotten a hundred percent of your way. That's not how our democracy is supposed to work.

Every day that this goes on is another day that we're not focused on doing what we need to be focused on, which is rebuilding this great country of ours so that our middle class is growing and everybody has got opportunity if they're willing to work hard. That's what I'm focused on. That's what Congress should be focused on as well. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif-Khonsari and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

The President's Weekly Address
September 28, 2013

Hi, everybody. This Tuesday is an important day for families, businesses, and our economy. It's the day a big part of the Affordable Care Act kicks in and tens of millions of Americans will finally have the same chance to buy quality, affordable health care as everybody else.

It's also the day that a group of far-right Republicans in Congress might choose to shut down the Government and potentially damage the economy just because they don't like this law. I'll get to that in a second.

But first, here's what the Affordable Care Act means for you. If you're one of the vast majority of Americans who already have health care, you already have new benefits you didn't before, like free mammograms and contraceptive care with no copay and discounts on prescription medicine for seniors. You've already got new protections in place too, like no more lifetime limits on your care, no more discriminating against children with preexisting conditions like asthma, or being able to stay on your parent's plan until you turn 26. That's all in place and available to Americans with health insurance right now.

If you don't have health insurance, or if you buy it on the individual market, then starting this Tuesday, October 1, you can visit healthcare.gov to find what's called the health insurance marketplace in your State.

This is a website where you can compare insurance plans side by side, the same way you'd shop for a TV or a plane ticket. You'll see new choices and new competition. Many of you will see cheaper prices, and many of you will be eligible for tax credits that bring down your costs even more. Nearly 6 in 10 uninsured Americans will be able to get coverage for a hundred dollars or less.

If you're one of the up to half of Americans with a preexisting condition, these new plans mean your insurer can no longer charge you more than anybody else. They can't charge women more than men for the same coverage. And they take effect on January 1.

So get covered at healthcare.gov and spread the word. These marketplaces will be open for business on Tuesday, no matter what. The Affordable Care Act is one of the most important things we've done as a country in decades to strengthen economic security for the middle class and all who strive to join the middle class. And it is going to work.

That's also one of the reasons it's so disturbing that Republicans in Congress are threatening to shut down the Government—or worse—if I don't agree to gut this law.

Congress has two responsibilities right now: pass a budget on time, and pay our bills on time. If Congress doesn't pass a budget by Monday, the end of the fiscal year, the Government shuts down, along with many vital services the American people depend on. On Friday, the Senate passed a bill to keep the Government open. But Republicans in the House have been more concerned with appeasing an extreme faction of their party than working to pass a budget that creates new jobs or strengthens the middle class. And in the next couple of days, these Republicans will have to decide whether to join the Senate and keep the Government open or create a crisis that will hurt people for the sole purpose of advancing their ideological agenda.

Past Government shutdowns have disrupted the economy. This shutdown would too. At a moment when our economy has steadily gained traction and our deficits have been falling faster than at any time in 60 years, a shutdown would be a purely self-inflicted wound. And that's why many Republican Senators and Republican Governors have urged Republicans in the House of Representatives to knock it off, pass a budget, and move on.

This brings me to a second responsibility that Congress has. Once they vote to keep the Government open, they also have to vote within the next couple weeks to allow the Treasury to pay the bills for the money that Congress has already spent. Failure to meet this responsibility would be far more dangerous than a Government shutdown, it would be an economic shutdown, with impacts not just here, but around the world.

Unfortunately, some Republicans have suggested that unless I agree to an even longer list of demands—not just gutting the health care law, but things like cutting taxes for millionaires or rolling back rules on big banks and polluters—they'll push the button, throwing America into default for the first time in history, and risk throwing all of us back into recession.

I will work with anyone who wants to have a serious conservation about our economic future. But I will not negotiate over Congress's responsibility to pay the bills it has already racked up. I don't know how to be more clear about this: no one gets to threaten the full faith

and credit of the United States of America just to extract ideological concessions. No one gets to hurt our economy and millions of innocent people just because there are a couple laws that you don't like. It hasn't been done in the past, and we're not going to start doing it now.

The American people have worked too hard to recover from crises to see extremists in their Congress cause another one. And every day this goes on is another day that we can't continue the work of rebuilding the American middle class. Congress needs to pass a budget in time, pay its bills on time, and refocus on the everyday concerns of the people who sent them there.

That's what I'm focused on. That's what I'll keep fighting for.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:15 p.m. on September 27 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on September 28. In the address, the President referred to H.J. Res. 59. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 28. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters
September 30, 2013

President Obama. Well, it's a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu back to the Oval Office. I think I've had the pleasure of hosting him more often than just about any other world leader, and hopefully, this will provide just some small measure of repayment for the wonderful visit that I had in Israel this spring. And I want to thank him and his family and his entire team for the tremendous hospitality that we had when we were there.

The Prime Minister and I were just talking about the fact, these are hectic times, and nowhere is that more true obviously than in the Middle East. And so we had an opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion about a range of issues.

I commended him for entering into good-faith negotiations with the Palestinian Authority in discussing how we can resolve what has been obviously one of the biggest challenges for a very long time in the region. And both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas have assigned outstanding negotiators. They have been engaging in serious conversations. And our goal continues to be to help facilitate—not dictate, but facilitate—the kinds of genuine negotiations that will result in two states living side by side in peace and security. And we have a limited amount of time to achieve that goal, and I appreciate the Prime Minister's courage in being willing to step forward on behalf of that goal.

We had an opportunity to discuss the situation in Syria. Obviously, we have a broad set of strategic concerns in Syria. We are both pleased that there is the possibility of finally getting chemical weapons stockpiles out of Syria. But I think we both share a deep concern that we have to be able to verify and enforce what has now been agreed to at the United Nations. Chemical weapons inside of Syria obviously have threatened Syrian civilians, but over the long term, also pose a threat to Israel. And we want to make sure that we get those indiscriminate, horrible weapons out of there.

And so we'll—we are consulting with the international community on these issues, and I shared with the Prime Minister our belief that we have to move with speed and dispatch in actually making sure that the agreement that was arrived at in the United Nations is followed through on.

In addition, we have the larger question of how to deal with the civil war that's taking place in Syria. And given Israel's significant interests in the spillover effects of activities

there, we will be consulting very closely with them.

We had an opportunity to discuss Egypt, and I shared with him what I said at the United Nations just a week ago, which is that we continue to have concerns about what has happened in Egypt, but we also are committed to a constructive relationship with Egypt, in part because of the important role that the Camp David Accords and the Egypt-Israeli peace serve not only for the stability and security in both those countries, but also for security in the region and U.S. security. So we will continue to work with the Egyptian Government, although urging them and pushing them in a direction in—that is more inclusive and that meets the basic goals of those who originally sought for more freedom and more democracy in that country.

And we had an opportunity obviously to discuss Iran. Both the Prime Minister and I agree, since I came into office, that it is imperative that Iran not possess a nuclear weapon. That is important for American security; it is important for Israeli security; it's important for world security because we do not want to trigger a nuclear arms race in the most volatile region in the world. And given the statements and actions from the Iranian regime in the past—the threats against Israel, the acts against Israel—it is absolutely clear that words are not sufficient, that we have to have actions that give the international community confidence that, in fact, they are meeting their international obligations fully and that they are not in a position to have a nuclear weapon.

What I also shared with the Prime Minister is that, because of the extraordinary sanctions that we have been able to put in place over the last several years, the Iranians are now prepared, it appears, to negotiate. We have to test diplomacy. We have to see if, in fact, they are serious about their willingness to abide by international norms and international law and international requirements and resolutions. And we in good faith will approach them, indicating that it is our preference to resolve these issues diplomatically.

But we enter into these negotiations very clear eyed. They will not be easy. And anything that we do will require the highest standards of verification in order for us to provide the sort of sanctions relief that I think they are looking for.

So we will be in close consultation with Israel and our other friends and allies in the region during this process, and our hope is that we can resolve this diplomatically. But as President of the United States, I've said before and I will repeat that we take no options off the table, including military options, in terms of making sure that we do not have a—nuclear weapons in Iran that would destabilize the region and potentially threaten the United States of America.

In all of this, our unshakeable bond with the Israeli people is stronger than ever. Our commitment to Israel's security is stronger than ever. And we are very much looking forward to continuing to work with our friends in Israel to make sure that U.S. security interests are met, Israel's security interests are met, but hopefully, that we can also bring about greater peace and greater stability in a region that has been wracked with violence and tensions for far too long.

And I appreciate the Prime Minister's views. He is always candid, and we're always able to have not only a good working relationship at the Prime Ministerial level, but also because of the outstanding work that our staffs do.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you. Mr. President, thank you for welcoming me and my delegation on what I know is a very busy day for you in Washington today.

There are many things on your plate, but I know that you know and the American people know that there is no better ally—more reliable, more stable, more democratic—other than Israel in a very broad, dangerous place. So I welcome the opportunity that we're having to discuss how we work closely together to address the enormous challenges that face both of us. And I think of those, the most important

challenge is preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

I appreciate deeply the fact that you have made clear that you remain committed to this goal. I also appreciate the statement you made that Iran's conciliatory words have to be matched by real actions: transparent, verifiable, meaningful actions.

Iran is committed to Israel's destruction. So, for Israel, the ultimate test of a future agreement with Iran is whether or not Iran dismantles its military nuclear program. We have a saying in Hebrew. We call it *mivchan hatotza'a*. You would say it in English, "What's the bottom line?" And the bottom line, again, is that Iran fully dismantles its military nuclear program.

In this regard, I wanted to express my appreciation to you for the enormous work that's been done to have a sanctions regime in place to thwart Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. I believe that it's the combination of a credible military threat and the pressure of those sanctions that has brought Iran to the negotiating table.

I also believe that if diplomacy is to work, those pressures must be kept in place. And I think they should not be lessened until there is verifiable success. And in fact, it is Israel's firm belief that if Iran continues to advance its nuclear program during negotiations, the sanctions should be strengthened. It's the combination, I believe, that has guided your policy and our policy so far, that has put a credible military threat and strong sanctions—I think is still the only formula that can get a peaceful resolution of this problem.

Mr. President, we discussed many of these, but I want to use this opportunity to thank you, Secretary of State Kerry, and others in your administration for helping to advance peace between Israel and the Palestinians. I remain committed to that peace. And I hope that our efforts—our common efforts—would lead to a secure and lasting peace.

We know that for peace to endure, it must be based on Israel's capacity to defend itself by itself. And I hope that we can achieve a historic transformation that will give a better future for us and our Palestinian neighbors and, who knows, one day with our other neighbors as well.

So I want to thank you again for your hospitality, for your efforts, and it's very, very good to see you again.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

Federal Government Shutdown

Q. Mr. President, are you resigned to a Government shutdown at this point? And given how close we are to the midnight deadline, have you had any conversations with Speaker Boehner over the past few days?

President Obama. I am not at all resigned. And I'll have a chance to obviously speak more to this. I'm going to have a Cabinet meeting this afternoon and may have some further thoughts for the press as the day goes on. But the bottom line is that the Senate has passed a bill that keeps the Government open, does not have a lot of extraneous issues to it, that allows us then to negotiate a longer term budget and address a range of other issues, but that ensures that we're not shutting down the Government and we're not shutting down the economy at a time when a lot of families out there are just getting some traction and digging themselves out of the hole that we've had as a consequence of the financial crisis.

I've said before, Congress has two responsibilities: Pass a budget; pay the bills. And I am not only open to, but eager to have, negotiations around a long-term budget that makes sure that we're investing in middle class families, helping the economy grow, giving people who are working hard a leg up and greater security and stability, and deals with some of our long-term challenges in terms of debt and deficits.

But the only way to do that is for everybody to sit down in good faith without threatening to harm women and veterans and children with a Government shutdown. And certainly, we can't have any kind of meaningful negotiations under the cloud of potential default, the first in U.S. history.

There's not a world leader, if you took a poll, who would say that it would be responsible or

consistent with America's leadership in the world for us not to pay our bills. We are the foundation of the world economy and the world financial system. And our currency is the reserve currency of the world. We don't mess with that. And we certainly don't allow domestic policy differences on issues that are unrelated to the budget to endanger not only our economy, but the world economy. So I suspect that I will be speaking to the leaders today, tomorrow, and the next day.

But there's a pretty straightforward solution to this. If you set aside the short-term politics and you look at the long term here, what it simply requires is everybody to act responsibly and do what's right for the American people.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.J. Res. 59.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
September 30, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Of all the responsibilities the Constitution endows to Congress, two should be fairly simple: pass a budget and pay America's bills.

But if the United States Congress does not fulfill its responsibility to pass a budget today, much of the United States Government will be forced to shut down tomorrow. And I want to be very clear about what that shutdown would mean: what will remain open and what will not.

With regard to operations that will continue: If you're on Social Security, you will keep receiving your checks. If you're on Medicare, your doctor will still see you. Everyone's mail will still be delivered. And Government operations related to national security or public safety will go on. Our troops will continue to serve with skill, honor, and courage. Air traffic controllers, prison guards, those who are with border control—our Border Patrol will remain on their posts, but their paychecks will be delayed until the Government reopens. NASA will shut down almost entirely, but Mission Control will remain open to support the astronauts serving on the Space Station.

I also want to be very clear about what would change. Office buildings would close. Paychecks would be delayed. Vital services that seniors and veterans, women and children, businesses and our economy depend on would be hamstrung. Business owners would see delays in raising capital, seeking infrastructure permits, or rebuilding after Hurricane Sandy. Veterans who have sacrificed for their country will find their support centers unstaffed. Tourists will find every one of America's national parks and monuments—from Yosemite to the Smithsonian to the Statue of Liberty—immediately closed. And of course, the communities and small businesses that rely on these national treasures for their livelihoods will be out of customers and out of luck.

And in keeping with the broad ramifications of a shutdown, I think it's important that everybody understand, the Federal Government is America's largest employer. More than 2 million civilian workers and 1.4 million Active Duty military serve in all 50 States and all around the world. In the event of a Government shutdown, hundreds of thousands of these dedicated public servants who stay on the job will do so without pay, and several hundred thousand more will be immediately and indefinitely furloughed without pay.

What, of course, will not be furloughed are the bills that they have to pay: their mortgages, their tuition payments, their car notes. These Americans are our neighbors. Their kids go to our schools. They worship where we do. They serve their country with pride. They are the customers of every business in this country. And they would be hurt greatly—and as a consequence, all of us will be hurt greatly—should Congress choose to shut the people's Government down.

So a shutdown will have a very real economic impact on real people right away. Past shutdowns have disrupted the economy significant-

ly. This one would too. It would throw a wrench into the gears of our economy at a time when those gears have gained some traction.

Five years ago right now, our economy was in meltdown. Today, our businesses have created 7½ million new jobs over the past 3½ years, the housing market is healing, and our deficits are falling fast. The idea of putting the American people's hard-earned progress at risk is the height of irresponsibility.

And it doesn't have to happen. Let me repeat this: It does not have to happen. All of this is entirely preventable if the House chooses to do what the Senate has already done, and that's the simple act of funding our Government without making extraneous and controversial demands in the process, the same way other Congresses have for more than 200 years.

Unfortunately, right now House Republicans continue to tie funding of the Government to ideological demands, like limiting a woman's access to contraception or delaying the Affordable Care Act, all to save face after making some impossible promises to the extreme right wing of their party.

So let me be clear about this: An important part of the Affordable Care Act takes effect tomorrow no matter what Congress decides to do today. The Affordable Care Act is moving forward. That funding is already in place. You can't shut it down. This is a law that passed both Houses of Congress, a law that bears my signature, a law that the Supreme Court upheld as constitutional, a law that voters chose not to repeal last November, a law that is already providing benefits to millions of Americans in the form of young people staying on their parent's plan until they're 26; seniors getting cheaper prescription drugs; making sure that insurance companies aren't imposing lifetime limits when you already have health insurance; providing rebates for consumers when insurance companies are spending too much money on overhead instead of health care. Those things are already happening.

Starting tomorrow, tens of millions of Americans will be able to visit healthcare.gov to shop for affordable health care coverage. So Americans who've lived—for years in some cases—with the fear that one illness could send them into bankruptcy, Americans who've been priced out of the market just because they've been sick once, they'll finally be able to afford coverage, quality coverage, many of them for the first time in their lives.

Some of them may be sick as we speak. And this is their best opportunity to get some security and some relief. Tens of thousands of Americans die every single year because they don't have access to affordable health care. Despite this, Republicans have said that if we lock these Americans out of affordable health care for one more year—if we sacrifice the health care of millions of Americans—then they'll fund the Government for a couple of more months. Does anybody truly believe that we won't have this fight again in a couple more months? Even at Christmas?

So here's the bottom line: I'm always willing to work with anyone of either party to make sure the Affordable Care Act works better, to make sure our Government works better. I'm always willing to work with anyone to grow our economy faster or to create new jobs faster, to get our fiscal house in order for the long run. I've demonstrated this time and time again, oftentimes to the consternation of my own party. But one faction of one party in one House of Congress in one branch of Government doesn't get to shut down the entire Government just to refight the results of an election.

Keeping the people's Government open is not a concession to me. Keeping vital services running and hundreds of thousands of Americans on the job is not something you give to the other side. It's our basic responsibility. It's something that we're doing for our military and our businesses and our economy and all the hard-working people out there: the person working for the Agricultural Department out in some rural community who's out there helping some farmers make sure that they're making some modest profit for all the hard work they're putting in. They're the person working for HUD who's helping somebody buy a house for the first time. They're somebody in a VA office who's counseling one of our vets who's got PTSD.

That's who we're here to serve. That's why we're supposed to be carrying out these responsibilities. It's why we should be avoiding these kinds of constant brinksmanship. It's something that we do in the ordinary process of this extraordinary system of Government that we have. You don't get to extract a ransom for doing your job, for doing what you're supposed to be doing anyway, or just because there's a law there that you don't like.

The American people sent us here to govern. They sent us here to make sure that we're doing everything we can to make their lives a little bit better: to create new jobs, to restore economic security, to rebuild the prospects of upward mobility. That's what they expect.

And they understand that there are differences between the parties, and we're going to be having some tough fights around those differences. And I respect the fact that the other party is not supposed to agree with me a hundred percent of the time, just like I don't agree with them. But they do also expect that we don't bring the entire Government to a halt or the entire economy to a halt just because of those differences.

And that's what they deserve. They've worked too hard, for too long to recover from previous crises just to have folks here in Washington manufacture yet another one that they have to dig themselves out of.

So Congress needs to keep our Government open, needs to pay our bills on time, and never, ever threaten the full faith and credit of the United States of America. And time is running out. My hope and expectation is that in the eleventh hour, once again, that Congress will choose to do the right thing and that the House of Representatives, in particular, will choose the right thing.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.J. Res. 59.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting
September 30, 2013

This is my Cabinet. And we're going to be discussing the impacts, potentially, of the shutdown and how all these various agencies will be managing to make sure the core essential functions continue, but also, obviously, to help try to manage what's going to be a very difficult potential situation for the employees of all these agencies, who are doing outstanding and very difficult work all across the country.

So I appreciate all the members of the Cabinet who are here. They have been doing a lot of planning. I wish they were spending more time focusing on how to grow jobs and the economy as opposed to having to spend time figuring out how they manage a Government shutdown. But as always, they're prepared. And we'll be getting a full briefing from the entire crew during the course of this meeting.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:19 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks on the Federal Government Shutdown and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
October 1, 2013

Good morning, everybody. At midnight last night, for the first time in 17 years, Republicans in Congress chose to shut down the Federal Government. Let me be more specific: One faction of one party in one House of Congress in one branch of Government shut down major parts of the Government, all because they didn't like one law.

This Republican shutdown did not have to happen. But I want every American to under-

stand why it did happen. Republicans in the House of Representatives refused to fund the Government unless we defunded or dismantled the Affordable Care Act. They've shut down the Government over an ideological crusade to deny affordable health insurance to millions of Americans. In other words, they demanded ransom just for doing their job.

And many Representatives, including an increasing number of Republicans, have made it clear that had they been allowed by Speaker Boehner to take a simple up-or-down vote on keeping the Government open, with no partisan strings attached, enough votes from both parties would have kept the American people's Government open and operating.

Now, we may not know the full impact of this Republican shutdown for some time. It will depend on how long it lasts. But we do know a couple of things. We know that the last time Republicans shut down the Government in 1996, it hurt our economy. And unlike 1996, our economy is still recovering from the worst recession in generations.

We know that certain services and benefits that America's seniors and veterans and business owners depend on must be put on hold. Certain offices, along with every national park and monument, must be closed. And while last night, I signed legislation to make sure our 1.4 million Active Duty military are paid through the shutdown, hundreds of thousands of civilian workers—many still on the job, many forced to stay home—aren't being paid, even if they have families to support and local businesses that rely on them. And we know that the longer this shutdown continues, the worse the effects will be. More families will be hurt. More businesses will be harmed.

So, once again, I urge House Republicans to reopen the Government, restart the services Americans depend on, and allow the public servants who have been sent home to return to work. This is only going to happen when Republicans realize they don't get to hold the entire economy hostage over ideological demands.

As I've said repeatedly, I am prepared to work with Democrats and Republicans to do the things we need to do to grow the economy and create jobs and get our fiscal house in order over the long run. Although I should add, this shutdown isn't about deficits or spending or budgets. After all, our deficits are falling at the fastest pace in 50 years. We've cut them in half since I took office. In fact, many of the demands the Republicans are now making would actually raise our deficits.

So no, this shutdown is not about deficits. It's not about budgets. This shutdown is about rolling back our efforts to provide health insurance to folks who don't have it. It's all about rolling back the Affordable Care Act. This, more than anything else, seems to be what the Republican Party stands for these days. I know it's strange that one party would make keeping people uninsured the centerpiece of their agenda, but that apparently is what it is.

And of course, what's stranger still is that shutting down our Government doesn't accomplish their stated goal. The Affordable Care Act is a law that passed the House; it passed the Senate. The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional. It was a central issue in last year's election. It is settled, and it is here to stay. And because of its funding sources, it's not impacted by a Government shutdown.

And these Americans are here with me today because, even though the Government is closed, a big part of the Affordable Care Act is now open for business. And for them, and millions like them, this is a historic day for a good reason. It's been a long time coming, but today, Americans who have been forced to go without insurance can now visit healthcare.gov and enroll in affordable new plans that offer quality coverage. That starts today.

And people will have 6 months to sign up. So over the next 6 months, people are going to have the opportunity—many times—in many cases, for the first time in their lives—to get affordable coverage that they desperately need.

Now, of course, if you're one of the 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, you don't need to do a thing. You're already benefiting from new benefits and protections that have been in place for some time under this law. But for the 15 percent of

Americans who don't have health insurance, this opportunity is life changing.

Now, let me just tell folks a few stories that are represented here today. A few years ago, Amanda Barrett left her job in New York to take care of her parents. And for a while, she had temporary insurance that covered her multiple sclerosis. But when it expired, many insurers wouldn't cover her because of her MS. And she ended up paying $1,200 a month. That's nowhere near affordable. So starting today, she can get covered for much less, because today's new plan can't use your medical history to charge you more than anybody else.

Sky-high premiums once forced Nancy Beigel to choose between paying her rent or paying for health insurance. She's been uninsured ever since. So she pays all of her medical bills out of pocket, puts some on her credit card, making them even harder to pay. Nancy says: "They talk about those who fall through the cracks. I fell through the cracks 10 years ago, and I've been stuck there ever since." Well, starting today, Nancy can get covered just like everybody else.

Trinace Edwards was laid off from her job a year ago today. Six months ago, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She couldn't afford insurance on the individual market, so she hasn't received treatment yet. Her daughter Lenace, a student at the University of Maryland, is considering dropping out of school to help pay her mom's bills. Well, starting today, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, Trinace can get covered without forcing her daughter to give up on her dreams.

So if these stories of hard-working Americans sound familiar to you, well, starting today, you and your friends and your family and your coworkers can get covered too. Just visit healthcare.gov, and there you can compare insurance plans, side by side, the same way you'd shop for a plane ticket on Kayak or a TV on Amazon. You enter some basic information; you'll be presented with a list of quality, affordable plans that are available in your area, with clear descriptions of what each plan covers and what it will cost. You'll find more choices, more competition, and in many cases, lower prices. Most uninsured Americans will find that they can get covered for a hundred dollars or less.

And you don't have to take my word for it. Go on the website, healthcare.gov, check it out for yourself. And then show it to your family and your friends and help them get covered, just like mayors and churches and community groups and companies are already fanning out to do across the country.

And there's a hotline where you can apply over the phone and get help with the application or just get questions that you have answered by real people in 150 different languages. So let me give you that number. The number is 1–800–318–2596; 1–800–318–2596. Check out healthcare.gov. Call that number. Show your family and friends how to use it. And we can get America covered, once and for all, so that the struggles that these folks have gone through and millions around the country have gone through for years finally get addressed.

And let me just remind people why I think this is so important. I heard a striking statistic yesterday. If you get cancer, you are 70 percent more likely to live another 5 years if you have insurance than if you don't. Think about that. That is what it means to have health insurance.

Set aside the issues of security and finances and how you're impacted by that, the stress involved in not knowing whether or not you're going to have health care. This is life-or-death stuff. Tens of thousands of Americans die each year just because they don't have health insurance. Millions more live with the fear that they'll go broke if they get sick. And today we begin to free millions of our fellow Americans from that fear.

Already, millions of young adults have been able to stay on their parents' plans until they turn 26. Millions of seniors already have gotten a discount on their prescription medicines. Already, millions of families have actually received rebates from insurance companies that didn't spend enough on their health care. So this law means more choice, more competition, lower costs for millions of Americans.

And this law doesn't just mean economic security for our families. It means we're finally

addressing the biggest drivers of our long-term deficits. It means a stronger economy.

Remember, most Republicans have made a whole bunch of predictions about this law that haven't come true. There are no "death panels." Costs haven't skyrocketed, they're growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. The last 3 years since I signed the Affordable Care Act into law are the three slowest rates of health spending growth on record.

And contrary to Republican claims, this law hasn't destroyed our economy. Over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created 7½ million new jobs. Just today we learned that our manufacturers are growing at the fastest rate in 2½ years. They have factored in the Affordable Care Act. They don't think it's a problem. What's weighing on the economy is not the Affordable Care Act, but the constant series of crises and the unwillingness to pass a reasonable budget by a faction of the Republican Party.

Now, like every new law, every new product rollout, there are going to be some glitches in the signup process along the way that we will fix. I've been saying this from the start. For example, we found out that there have been times this morning where the site has been running more slowly than it normally will. The reason is because more than 1 million people visited healthcare.gov before 7 in the morning.

To put that in context, there were five times more users in the marketplace this morning than have ever been on medicare.gov at one time. That gives you a sense of how important this is to millions of Americans around the country, and that's a good thing. And we're going to be speeding things up in the next few hours to handle all this demand that exceeds anything that we had expected.

Consider that just a couple of weeks ago, Apple rolled out a new mobile operating system. And within days, they found a glitch, so they fixed it. I don't remember anybody suggesting Apple should stop selling iPhones or iPads or threatening to shut down the company if they didn't. That's not how we do things in America. We don't actively root for failure. We get to work, we make things happen, we make them better, we keep going.

So, in that context, I'll work with anybody who's got a serious idea to make the Affordable Care Act work better. I've said that repeatedly. But as long as I am President, I will not give in to reckless demands by some in the Republican Party to deny affordable health insurance to millions of hard-working Americans.

I want Republicans in Congress to know: These are the Americans you'd hurt if we're—you were allowed to dismantle this law. Americans like Amanda, Nancy, and Trinace, who now finally have the opportunity for basic security and peace of mind of health care just like everybody else, including Members of Congress. The notion that you'd make a condition for reopening the Government that I make sure these folks don't have health care, that doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense.

Now, let me make one closing point. This Republican shutdown threatens our economy at a time when millions of Americans are still looking for work and businesses are starting to get some traction. So the timing is not good. Of course, a lot of the Republicans in the House ran for office 2 years ago promising to shut down the Government, and so, apparently, they've now gotten their wish. But as I've said before, the irony that the House Republicans have to contend with is, they've shut down a whole bunch of parts of the Government, but the Affordable Care Act is still open for business.

And this may be why you've got many Republican Governors and Senators and even a growing number of reasonable Republican Congressmen who are telling the extreme right of their party to knock it off, pass a budget, move on.

And I want to underscore the fact that Congress doesn't just have to end this shutdown and reopen the Government, Congress generally has to stop governing by crisis. They have to break this habit. It is a drag on the economy. It is not worthy of this country.

For example, one of the most important things Congress has to do in the next couple weeks is to raise what's called the debt ceiling. And it's important to understand what this is.

This is a routine vote. Congress has taken this vote 45 times to raise the debt ceiling since Ronald Reagan took office. It does not cost taxpayers a single dime. It does not grow our deficits by a single dime. It does not authorize anybody to spend any new money whatsoever. All it does is authorize the Treasury to pay the bills on what Congress has already spent.

Think about that. If you buy a car and you've got a car note, you do not save money by not paying your car note. You're just a deadbeat. If you buy a house, you don't save money by not authorizing yourself to pay the mortgage. You're just going to be foreclosed on your home. That's what this is about.

It is routine. It is what they're supposed to do. This is not a concession to me. It is not some demand that's unreasonable that I'm making. This is what Congress is supposed to do as a routine matter. And they shouldn't wait until the last minute to do it. The last time Republicans even threatened this course of action—many of you remember, back in 2011—our economy staggered, our credit rating was downgraded for the first time. If they go through with it this time and force the United States to default on its obligations for the first time in history, it would be far more dangerous than a Government shutdown, as bad as a shutdown is. It would be an economic shutdown.

So I'll speak more on this in the coming days, but let me repeat: I will not negotiate over Congress's responsibility to pay bills it's already racked up. I'm not going to allow anybody to drag the good name of the United States of America through the mud just to refight a settled election or extract ideological demands. Nobody gets to hurt our economy and millions of hard-working families over a law you don't like.

There are a whole bunch of things that I'd like to see passed through Congress that the House Republicans haven't passed yet, and I'm not out there saying, well, I'm not—I'm going to let America default unless Congress does something that they don't want to do. That's not how adults operate. Certainly, that's not how our Government should operate. And that's true whether there's a Democrat in this office or a Republican in this office. Doesn't matter whether it's a Democratic House of Representatives or a Republican-controlled House of Representatives. There are certain rules that everybody abides by because we don't want to hurt other people just because we have a political disagreement.

So my main—my basic message to Congress is this: Pass a budget. End the Government shutdown. Pay your bills. Prevent an economic shutdown. Don't wait. Don't delay. Don't put our economy or our people through this any longer.

I am more than happy to work with them on all kinds of issues. I want to get back to work on the things that the American people sent us here to work on: creating new jobs, new growth, new security for our middle class.

We're better than this. Certainly, the American people are a lot better than this. And I believe that what we've accomplished for Amanda and Nancy and Trinace and tens of millions of their fellow citizens on this day proves that even when the odds are long and the obstacles are many, we are and always will be a country that can do great things together.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you, all of you, for the great work that you're doing. And thank you, Kathleen Sebelius, for the outstanding work that she's doing making sure that millions of Americans can get health insurance.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:01 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Washington, DC, resident Amanda Barrett; Beltsville, MD, resident Nancy J. Beigel; and Temple Hills, MD, resident Trinace Edwards.

Remarks at M. Luis Construction Company in Rockville, Maryland
October 3, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Good to see all of you. Please, please have a seat. Well, hello, Rockville!

Let me start by recognizing three public servants who fight hard every day for Maryland families and businesses. Now, first of all, Congressman Chris Van Hollen is here. Yay, Chris! Congressman John Delaney is here. And we have the acting head of the Small Business Administration, Jeanne Hulit is here.

And I also want to give a big thanks to your bosses, Cidalia and Natalia, for being such gracious hosts. I had a chance to meet them at the White House, and—[*applause*]. Thank you. Now I know where they got their good looks from, because I had a chance to meet mom and dad, and their beautiful families. So I'm so glad to be here. And I had a chance to learn a little bit about their story. So when their parents brought them from Portugal to America almost 40 years ago, no one in the family spoke a word of English. But that didn't stop their father Manuel and their mother Albertina from having a big dream, believing that if they worked hard, they could get ahead and that even though they'd never had any schooling, maybe their daughters could go to college. Maybe in America you could make it if you tried. That's what they believed.

So they started their own construction company with a pickup truck and a wheelbarrow. And when Cidalia and Natalia turned 14, they began to help: cleaning tools, translating documents. And they became the first in their family to go to college. And after graduation, they started their own business, and later, they bought the family business from their parents. So today, M. Luis Construction is a $60 million company with about 250 employees. And I understand you're opening your fourth office at the end of this month. So this story is what America is all about. You start off, maybe you don't have a lot, but you're willing to work hard, you put in the time, opportunities out there, and you're able to pass on an even better life to your family, your children, your grandchildren.

And it's good news that after how hard the construction industry got hit during the recession, things are starting to get a little better. Remember, it was just 5 years ago that our economy was in a free fall. Businesses were shedding hundreds of thousands of jobs every single month, and the recession ultimately cost millions of Americans their jobs, their homes, their savings—everything they had worked hard to build.

Today, over the last 3½ years, our businesses have added 7½ million new jobs. Our deficits are falling. Our housing market is healing, which means construction is improving. Manufacturing is growing. The auto industry is back. America is on pace to become the number-one energy producer in the world this year. More small businesses have gotten loans so they can grow and they can hire, just like M. Luis did with the help of the Small Business Jobs Act that I signed 3 years ago. So that's part of what allowed this company to grow.

So we still have a long way to go. We've still got a lot of work to do, especially to rebuild the middle class. But we're making steady progress. And the reason I'm here is, we can't afford to threaten that progress right now. Right now hundreds of thousands of Americans, hard-working Americans, suddenly aren't receiving their paycheck. Right now they're worrying about missing the rent or their mortgage or even making ends meet. We can all relate to that. Imagine if suddenly you weren't sure whether you were going to get your next paycheck, with all the bills that might be mounting up. Well, that's what's happening right now to hundreds of thousands of Americans across the country.

Companies like this one worry that their businesses are going to be disrupted, because obviously—particularly in an area like Maryland, Virginia, where there are a lot of Federal workers—you don't know how that's going to impact the economy. Veterans, seniors,

women—they're all worrying that the services they depend on will be disrupted too.

And the worst part is, this time it's not because of a once-in-a-lifetime recession. This isn't happening because of some financial crisis. It's happening because of a reckless Republican shutdown in Washington.

Audience member. That's right!

The President. Now, we've all seen the offices locked down, the monuments closed. We've heard about services denied; we've heard about benefits that are delayed. But the impacts of the shutdown go way beyond those things that you're seeing on television. Those hundreds of thousands of Americans—a lot of whom live around here—don't know when they're going to get their next paycheck, and that means stores and restaurants around here don't know if they'll have as many customers.

Across the country, you've got farmers in rural areas and small-business owners who deserve a loan, but they're being left in the lurch right now. They might have an application pending as we speak, but there's nobody in the office to process the loan. The SBA gives a billion dollars of loans a month to small businesses. A billion dollars a month goes to small businesses all across the country. Right now those can't be processed because there's nobody there to process them.

Veterans who deserve our support are getting less help. Little kids who deserve a Head Start have been sent home from the safe places where they learn and grow every single day. And of course, their families then have to scramble to figure out what to do. And the longer this goes on, the worse it will be. And it makes no sense.

The American people elected their representatives to make their lives easier, not harder. And there is one way out of this reckless and damaging Republican shutdown: Congress has to pass a budget that funds our Government with no partisan strings attached.

Now, I want everybody to understand what's happened, because sometimes when this gets reported on, everybody kind of thinks, well, you know, both sides are just squabbling; Democrats and Republicans, they're always arguing, so neither side is behaving properly. I want everybody to understand what's happened here. The Republicans passed a temporary budget for 2 months at a funding level that we, as Democrats, actually think is way too low because we're not providing help for more small businesses, doing more for early childhood education, doing more to rebuild our infrastructure. But we said, okay, while we're still trying to figure out this budget, we're prepared to go ahead and take the Republican budget levels that they proposed.

So the Senate passed that with no strings attached, not because it had everything the Democrats wanted. In fact, it had very little that the Democrats wanted. But we said, let's go ahead and just make sure that other people aren't hurt while negotiations are still taking place.

So that's already passed the Senate. And we know there are enough Republicans and Democrats to vote in the House of Representatives for the same thing. So I want everybody to understand this: There are enough Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives today that, if the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, simply let the bill get on the floor for an up-or-down vote—every Congressman could vote their conscience—the shutdown would end today.

The only thing that is keeping the Government shut down, the only thing preventing people from going back to work and basic research starting back up and farmers and small-business owners getting their loans—the only thing that's preventing all that from happening, right now, today, in the next 5 minutes—is that Speaker John Boehner won't even let the bill get a yes-or-no vote, because he doesn't want to anger the extremists in his party. That's all. That's what this whole thing is about.

We've heard a lot from congressional Republicans in the past couple of days saying they don't want this shutdown. Well, there's a simple way to prove it. Send the bill to the floor. Let everybody vote. It will pass. Send me the bill. I will sign it. The shutdown will be over, and we can get back to the business of governing and helping the American people.

It could happen in the next half hour. National parks, monuments, offices would all reopen immediately. Benefits and services would resume again. Hundreds of thousands of dedicated public servants who are worrying about whether they're going to be able to pay the mortgage or pay the car note, they'd start going back to work right away. So my simple message today is: Call a vote. Call a vote.

Audience members. Call a vote!

The President. Put it on the floor, and let every individual Member of Congress make up their own minds. And they can show the American people, are you for a shutdown or not? If you're not for a shutdown, you'll vote for the bill; if you're for a shutdown, you won't vote for a bill. We don't have to twist anybody's arms. But that way, the American people will be clear about who is responsible for the shutdown. Or alternatively, more hopefully, they'd be clear that this is something that doesn't make sense and we should go ahead and make sure that we're looking out for the American people. It should be that simple.

But as I said, the problem we've got is that there's one faction of one party in one half of one branch of Government that so far has refused to allow that yes-or-no vote unless they get some massive partisan concessions in exchange for doing what they're supposed to be doing anyway, in exchange for doing what everybody else agrees is necessary. And they won't agree to end the shutdown until they get their way. And you may think I'm exaggerating, but just the other day, one Tea Party Republican called the idea of a shutdown "wonderful." Another said that a shutdown is "exactly what we wanted." Well, they got exactly what they wanted. Now they're trying to figure out how to get out of it.

Just yesterday one House Republican said—I'm quoting here, all right, because I want to make sure people understand I didn't make this up—one House Republican said: "We're not going to be disrespected. We have to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is." That was a quote. "We're not going to be disrespected. We've got to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is." Think about that.

You have already gotten the opportunity to serve the American people. There is no higher honor than that. You've already gotten the opportunity to help businesses like this one, workers like these. So the American people aren't in the mood to give you a goodie bag to go with it. What you get is our intelligence professionals being back on the job. What you get is our medical researchers back on the job. What you get are little kids back into Head Start. What you get are our national parks and monuments open again. What you get is the economy not stalling, but continuing to grow. What you get are workers continuing to be hired. That's what you get. That's what you should be asking for. Take a vote, stop this farce, and end this shutdown right now.

If you're being disrespected, it's because of that attitude you got: that you deserve to get something for doing your job. Everybody here just does their job, right? You don't—if you're working here and in the middle of the day you just stopped and said, you know what, I want to get something, but I don't know exactly what I'm going to get. [*Laughter*] But I'm just going to stop working until I get something. I'm going to try—I'm going to shut down the whole plant until I get something.

Audience member. You'd get fired.

The President. You'd get fired. [*Applause*] Right? Because the deal is, you've already gotten hired. You've got a job. You're getting a paycheck. And so you also are getting the pride of doing a good job and contributing to a business and looking out for your fellow workers. That's what you're getting. Well, it shouldn't be any different for a Member of Congress.

Now, unlike past shutdowns—I want to make sure everybody understands this because, again, sometimes, the tendency is to say, well, both sides are at fault—this one has nothing to do with deficits or spending or budgets. Our deficits are falling at the fastest pace in 60 years. We've cut the deficits in half since I took office. And some of the things that the Republicans are asking for right now would actually add to our deficits. Seriously.

So this is not about spending. And this isn't about fiscal responsibility. This whole thing is about one thing: the Republican obsession with dismantling the Affordable Care Act and denying affordable health insurance to millions of Americans. That's all this has become about. That seems to be the only thing that unites the Republican Party these days.

Through this whole fight, they've said the American people don't want Obamacare, so we should shut down the Government to repeal it or delay it. But here's the problem: The Government is now shut down, but the Affordable Care Act is still open for business. So they're not even accomplishing what they say they want to accomplish. And by the way, in the first 2 days since the new marketplaces—basically, big group plans that we've set up—the first two 2 that they opened, websites where you can compare and purchase new affordable insurance plans and maybe get tax credits to reduce your costs, millions of Americans have made it clear, they do want health insurance.

More than 6 million people visited the website healthcare.gov the day it opened. Nearly 200,000 people picked up the phone and called the call center. In Kentucky alone—this is a State where I didn't—I didn't win Kentucky. [*Laughter*] So I know they weren't doing it for me. In Kentucky, nearly 11,000 people applied for new insurance plans in the first 2 days. Just in one State, Kentucky. And many Americans are finding out when they go on the website that they'll save a lot of money or get health insurance for the first time.

So my—I would think that if in fact this was going to be such a disaster that the Republicans say it's going to be, that it was going to be so unpopular, they wouldn't have to shut down the Government. They could wait, nobody would show any interest, there'd be, like, two people on the website—[*laughter*]—and everybody would then vote for candidates who want to repeal it.

It's not as if Republicans haven't had a chance to debate the health care law. It passed the House of Representatives. It passed the Senate. The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional. You remember all this. Last November, voters rejected the Presidential candidate that ran on a platform to repeal it. So the Affordable Care Act has gone through every single democratic process, all three branches of Government. It's the law of the land. It's here to stay.

I've said to Republicans, if there are specific things you think can improve the law to make it even better for people as opposed to just gutting it and leaving 25 million people without health insurance, I'm happy to talk to you about that. But a Republican shutdown won't change the fact that millions of people need health insurance and that the Affordable Care Act is being implemented. The shutdown does not change that. All the shutdown is doing is making it harder for ordinary Americans to get by and harder for businesses to create jobs at a time when our economy is just starting to gain traction again.

You've heard Republicans say that Obamacare will hurt the economy, but the economy has been growing and creating jobs. The single greatest threat to our economy and to our businesses like this one is not the Affordable Care Act, it's the unwillingness of Republicans in Congress to stop refighting a settled election or making the demands that have nothing to do with the budget. They need to move on to the actual business of governing. That's what will help the economy. That's what will grow the economy. That's what will put people back to work.

And more than that, House Republicans need to stop careening from one crisis to another in everything they do. Have you noticed that? Since they've taken over the House of Representatives, we have one of these crises every 3 months. Have you noticed? And you keep on thinking, all right, well, this is going to be the last one; they're not going to do this again. And then they do it again.

I know you're tired of it. I'm tired of it. It doesn't mean that they're wrong on every single issue. I've said I'm happy to negotiate with you on anything. I don't think any one party has a monopoly on wisdom. But you don't negotiate by putting a gun to the other person's head or, worse yet, by putting a gun to the

American people's head by threatening a shutdown.

And by the way, even after Congress reopens your Government, it's going to have to turn around very quickly and do something else, and that's pay America's bills. I want to spend a little time on this. It's called—it's something called raising the debt ceiling. And it's got a lousy name, so a lot of people end up thinking, I don't know, I don't think we should raise our debt ceiling, because it sounds like we're raising our debt. But that's not what this is about.

It doesn't cost taxpayers a single dime. It doesn't grow our deficits by a single dime. It doesn't allow anybody to spend any new money whatsoever. So it's not something that raises our debt. What it does is allow the U.S. Treasury, the U.S. Government to pay the bills that Congress has already racked up. I want you to think about this.

If you go to a restaurant, you order a meal, you eat it. Maybe you have some wine. Maybe you have two glasses of wine, great meal. And then you look at the tab—it's pretty expensive—and you decide, I'm not going to pay the bill. Well, you're not saving money. You're not being frugal. You're just a deadbeat, right? [*Laughter*] If you buy a house and you decide, man, this month, I'd rather go on vacation somewhere, so I'm not going to pay my mortgage, you didn't just save yourself some money. You're just going to get foreclosed on.

So you don't save money by not paying your bills. You don't reduce your debt by not paying your bills. All you're doing is making yourself unreliable and hurting your credit rating. And you'll start getting those phone calls and those notices in the mail. And the next time you try to borrow, somebody is going to say, uh-uh, because you don't pay your bills; you're a deadbeat. Well, the same is true for countries.

The only thing that the debt ceiling does is to let the U.S. Treasury pay for what Congress has already bought. That's why it's something that has been routine. Traditionally, it's not a big deal. Congress has raised it 45 times since Ronald Reagan took office. This is just kind of a routine part of keeping the Government running. The last time the House Republicans flirted with not raising the debt ceiling, back in 2011—some of you remember this—our economy took a bad hit. Our country's credit rating was downgraded for the first time, just like you'd be downgraded if you didn't pay your mortgage.

This time, they are threatening to actually force the United States to default on its obligations for the very first time in history. Now, you'll hear John Boehner and Mitch McConnell and these other Republicans say, we don't want to default. But everybody knows—it's written about in all the papers—that their basic theory is, okay, if the shutdown doesn't work, then we are going to try to get some extra concessions out of the President. We'll put, like a long laundry list, all the things that we want that we can't get passed on our own. And if we don't get it, we'll tell them we don't—we won't vote to pay the country's bills. We'll let the country default.

I'm not just making this up. I mean, it's common knowledge. Every reporter here knows it. And I want you to understand the consequences of this. As reckless as a Government shutdown is, as many people as being—as are being hurt by a Government shutdown, an economic shutdown that results from default would be dramatically worse. In a Government shutdown, Social Security checks still go out on time. In an economic shutdown, if we don't raise the debt ceiling, they don't go out on time.

In a Government shutdown, disability benefits still arrive on time. In an economic shutdown, they don't. In a Government shutdown, millions of Americans—not just Federal workers—everybody faces real economic hardship. In an economic shutdown, falling pensions and home values and rising interest rates on things like mortgages and student loans—all those things risk putting us back into a bad recession, which will affect this company and those workers and all of you. And that's not my analysis. That's—every economist out there is saying the same thing. We've never done it before.

And the United States is the center of the world economy. So if we screw up, everybody

gets screwed up. The whole world will have problems, which is why generally nobody has ever thought to actually threaten not to pay our bills. It would be the height of irresponsibility. And that's why I've said this before; I'm going to repeat it: There will be no negotiations over this. The American people are not pawns in some political game. You don't get to demand some ransom in exchange for keeping the Government running. You don't get to demand ransom in exchange for keeping the economy running. You don't get to demand ransom for doing your most basic job.

And the sooner that the Republicans in Congress heed the warnings not just of me or Democrats like Chris and John, but heed the warnings of the Chamber of Commerce and CEOs and economists and a whole lot of Republicans outside of Congress; they're all saying, do not do this. They're all saying to Congress, do your job. And the sooner you do your job, the less damage you'll do to our economy and to businesses like this one.

So pass a budget, end the Government shutdown. Pay our bills. Prevent a economic shutdown. Just vote and end this shutdown. And you should do it today so we can get back to growing this economy, creating jobs, and strengthening our middle class.

Let me close just by sharing a story I heard as I was getting ready to come here today. Many of you already know it. Two years ago, a mulch factory next to M. Luis's main equipment storage facility caught fire, and most of the company's equipment was destroyed, causing millions of dollars in damage. But even while the fire was still burning, dozens of employees rushed over to the facility and tried to save as much as they could. Some of you were probably there. And when they finished cutting fire lines and spraying down the perimeter of their own property, they went over to help their neighbors.

And afterwards, even though all the employees here at M. Luis are on salary, even though the company had just taken a big financial hit, Cidalia and Natalia paid everyone overtime, and along with each check, they included a personalized note saying just how much they had appreciated the efforts of the workers. And Cidalia said, everybody says the biggest asset to a business is employees. Some people mean it; some people don't. We actually do.

So this company right here is full of folks who do right by each other. They don't try to see if they can work every angle. They don't lie about each other. They don't try to undermine each other. They understand they're supposed to be on the same team. You pitch in, you look out for one another. When somebody gets knocked down, you help them back up. You don't ask what can you get out of this, because you know that success doesn't depend on one of you, it depends on all of you working together.

Well, America is no different. I see that same spirit in so many cities and towns that I visit all across the country. It is alive and well all across the country. It's alive and well in this community where restaurants and businesses are rallying around their regulars, and they're looking out for all the dedicated public servants who have been furloughed. You've been reading stories about restaurants who are saying, you know what, while you're on furlough, come on, we'll give you a burger, we'll give you a meal, we'll help you out.

That's the American ideal. It says, we're working together, looking out for one another, meeting our responsibilities, doing our jobs, thinking about future generations. And that's why I believe, ultimately, reason and common sense will prevail. That spirit, at some point, will infiltrate Washington as well. Because I think the American people are so good and so decent, they're going to get better behavior from their Government than this. And we'll once again make sure this is a country where you can make it if you try.

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:49 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Cidalia Luis-Akbar, president, and Natalia Luis, vice presi-

dent, M. Luis Construction Co. Inc., and their parents Albertina and Manuel Luis; Reps. Michele M. Bachmann and Marlin A. Stutzman; and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. He also referred to H.J. Res. 59.

The President's Weekly Address
October 5, 2013

Good morning. Earlier this week, the Republican House of Representatives chose to shut down a Government they don't like over a health care law that they don't like. Now, I've talked a lot about the real-world consequences of this shutdown in recent days: the services disrupted, the benefits delayed, the public servants kicked off the job without pay.

But today I want to let the Americans dealing with those real-world consequences have their say. And these are just a few of the many heartbreaking letters I've gotten from them in the past couple weeks, including more than 30,000 over the past few days.

Kelly Mumper lives in rural Alabama. She works in early education, and she has three kids of her own in the Marines. Here's what she wrote to me on Wednesday:

> Our Head Start agency was forced to stop providing services on October 1 for over 770 children, and 175 staff were furloughed. I'm extremely concerned for the welfare of these children. There are parents who work and who attend school. Where are they leaving their children? Is it a safe environment? Are [they] getting the food that they receive at their Head Start program?

On the day Julia Pruden's application to buy a home for her and her special needs children was approved by the USDA's rural development direct loan program, she wrote me from Minot, North Dakota:

> We put in an offer to purchase a home this weekend, and it was accepted. If funding does not go through, our chances of the American Dream [are] down the drain. We've worked really hard to get our credit to be acceptable to purchase a home. If it weren't for the direct lending program provided by the USDA, we would not qualify to buy the home we found.

These are just two of the many letters I've received from people who work hard, try to make ends meet, try to do right by their families. They're military or military spouses who've seen commissaries closed on their bases. They're veterans worried the services they've earned won't be there. They're business owners who've seen their contracts with the Government put on hold, worried they'll have to let people go. I want them to know, I read the stories you share with me.

These are our fellow Americans. These are the people who sent us here to serve. And I know that Republicans in the House of Representatives are hearing the same kinds of stories too.

As I made clear to them this week, there's only one way out of this reckless and damaging shutdown: pass a budget that funds our Government with no partisan strings attached. The Senate's already done this. And there are enough Republican and Democratic votes in the House of Representatives willing to do the same and end this shutdown immediately. Unfortunately, the far right of the Republican Party won't let Speaker Boehner give that bill a yes-or-no vote. Take that vote. Stop this farce. End this shutdown now.

The American people don't get to demand ransom in exchange for doing their job. Neither does Congress. They don't get to hold our democracy or our economy hostage over a settled law. They don't get to kick a child out of Head Start if they don't agree to take her parent's health insurance away. That's not how our democracy is supposed to work.

That's why I won't pay a ransom in exchange for reopening the Government. And I certainly won't pay a ransom in exchange for raising the debt ceiling. For as reckless as a Government shutdown is, an economic shutdown that comes with default—with America not paying its bills—would be dramatically worse.

I'll always work with anyone of either party on ways to grow this economy, create new jobs, and get our fiscal house in order for the long haul. But not under the shadow of these threats to our economy. So my message is simple: Pass a budget. End this Government shutdown. Pay our bills. Prevent an economic shutdown.

These Americans and millions of others are counting on Congress to do the right thing. And I will do everything I can to make sure they do.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3 p.m. on October 4 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on October 5. In the address, the President referred to H.J. Res. 59. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 5.

Remarks on the Federal Government Shutdown
October 7, 2013

Okay. I'm here at FEMA for a couple of reasons. First of all, I want to thank Craig Fugate, his entire team, and the incredible workers who are here at FEMA. They are having to, under less than optimal situations, still respond to Mother Nature, which doesn't stop just because the Government has shut down.

I wanted to get initially a briefing on what had happened with Hurricane Karen, became Tropical Storm Karen, and then fortunately dissipated, so we dodged a bullet there. In the meantime, we're on tornado watch here in the Mid-Atlantic States because of severe weather patterns. And we've got blizzards up north; we've got some weather patterns in the middle of the country that we're still monitoring. And so I just want to say thank you to all of you for the incredible work that you're doing.

I think it's important to understand that the people here at FEMA have been doing everything they can to respond to potential events. Here at FEMA, they're in touch with their State and local partners in case resources are needed. FEMA remains prepared for natural disasters year around, with supplies prepositioned in distribution centers across the country.

But their job has been made more difficult. Thanks to the folks at FEMA, we were prepared for what might have happened down in Florida. Nevertheless, the Government is still shut down, services are still interrupted, and hundreds of thousands of hard-working public servants, including many FEMA professionals, are still furloughed without pay, or they're not allowed to work at all.

So Craig was just explaining to me, here at FEMA, about 86 percent of the FEMA workforce is furloughed. In response to the potential event that might have happened down in Florida and along the coasts, Craig called back 200 of those workers. Keep in mind, calling them back doesn't mean they were getting paid, it just means they had the privilege of working without pay to make sure that they were doing everything they can to respond to the potential needs of their fellow citizens.

Now that this particular storm has dissipated, Craig is going to have to refurlough at least a hundred of those folks who were called back. So think about that. Here you are, somebody who's a FEMA professional dedicated to doing your job; at a moment's notice, you're willing to show up here in case people got in trouble and respond to them, even though you're not getting paid, even though you don't have certainty. And now you're being put back on furlough because the Government is shut down. That's no way of doing business.

That, by the way, just speaks to the day-to-day emergencies that may come up and that is FEMA's job to respond to. Craig was also explaining the fact that when it comes to training first responders, for example, we have on a weekly basis already scheduled training for first responders that now have to be rescheduled. It will probably end up ultimately costing the Government more money for us to put those things back together again. And so not only is this shutdown hurting FEMA workers, not only is it making it more difficult for us to respond to potential natural disasters, but it may actually end up costing taxpayers more than it should.

Right now Congress should do what's in the best interests of the economy and the American people, and that's move beyond this manufactured crisis and work together to focus on growth, jobs, and providing the vital services that Americans all across the country depend on, including the services that FEMA provides.

I heard a lot of talk over the weekend that the real problem is, is that the President will not negotiate. Well, let me tell you something: I have said from the start of the year that I'm happy to talk to Republicans about anything related to the budget. There's not a subject that I am not willing to engage in, work on, negotiate, and come up with commonsense compromises on.

What I've said is that I cannot do that under the threat that if Republicans don't get a hundred percent of their way, they're going to either shut down the Government or they are going to default on America's debt, so that America for the first time in history does not pay its bills. That is not something I will do. We're not going to establish that pattern.

We're not going to negotiate under the threat of further harm to our economy and middle class families. We're not going to negotiate under the threat of a prolonged shutdown until Republicans get a hundred percent of what they want. We're not going to negotiate under the threat of economic catastrophe that economists and CEOs increasingly warn would result if Congress chose to default on America's obligations.

Now, the other thing I heard over the weekend was this notion that Congress doesn't have the capacity to end this shutdown. The truth of the matter is, there are enough Republican and Democratic votes in the House of Representatives right now to end this shutdown immediately with no partisan strings attached. The House should hold that vote today. If Republicans and Speaker Boehner are saying there are not enough votes, then they should prove it. Let the bill go to the floor and let's see what happens. Just vote. Let every Member of Congress vote their conscience, and they can determine whether or not they want to shut the Government down.

My suspicion is—my very strong suspicion is—that there are enough votes there. And the reason that Speaker Boehner hasn't called a vote on it is because he doesn't, apparently, want to see the Government shutdown end at the moment unless he's able to extract concessions that don't have anything to do with the budget. Well, I think the American people simply want Government to work. And there's no reason that there has to be a shutdown in order for the kinds of negotiations Speaker Boehner says he wants to proceed. Hold a vote. Call a vote right now, and let's see what happens.

The second thing Congress needs to do is to raise the debt ceiling next week so the Treasury can pay the bills that Congress has already spent. That's what most Americans do if they buy something. If they buy a car or if they buy a house, if they put something on a credit card, they understand they've got to pay the bills.

This is something routine. It's been done more than 40 times since Ronald Reagan was President. It has never before been used in the kind of ways that the Republicans are talking about using it right now. We can't threaten economic catastrophe in the midst of budget negotiations.

So authorize the Treasury to pay America's bills. Pass a budget, end the Government shutdown, pay our bills, and prevent an economic shutdown.

And as soon as that happens, I am eager and ready to sit down and negotiate with Republicans on a whole range of issues: How do we create more jobs? How do we grow the economy? How do we boost manufacturing? How do we make sure our kids are getting a first-class education? All those things will be on the table. I'm happy to talk about health care, happy to talk about energy policy, how do we deal with our long-term fiscal situation.

All those things I've been eager and anxious to talk to Republicans about for the last 7 months, and I've put out a budget that specifically lays out my vision for how we're going to grow this economy. And I expect the Republicans should do the same, and we can negotiate it. But we shouldn't hurt a whole bunch of people in order for one side to think that they're going to have a little more leverage in those negotiations.

Last point I'm going to make: The bill that is being presented to end the Government shutdown reflects Republican priorities. It's the Republican budget. The funding levels of this short-term funding bill, called the CR, is far lower than what Democrats think it should be. Nevertheless, Democrats are prepared to put the majority of votes on to reopen the Government. So when you hear this notion that Democrats aren't compromising, we're compromising so much we're willing to reopen the Government at funding levels that reflect Republican wishes, don't at all reflect our wishes.

For example, here at FEMA, they're still subject to the sequester, so even before the shutdown, they were having trouble making sure that everybody was staying on the job and fulfilling all of their various functions.

We need to get that sequester lifted that's been hanging over the head of the economy and Federal agencies during the course of this entire year. This short-term legislation to reopen the Government doesn't even address that. That has to be done in a broader budget framework.

So Democrats have said we are willing to pass a bill that reflects the Republicans' priorities in terms of funding levels. That's a pretty significant compromise. What we're not willing to do is to create a permanent pattern in which unless you get your way, the Government is shut down or America defaults. That's not how we do business in this country, and we're not going to start now.

So again, I want to thank everybody at FEMA here for the extraordinary work that we're—that you're doing. You show each and every day that you take your responsibilities seriously. You do your jobs with consummate professionalism. And hopefully, you're setting a good example for Members of Congress. They need to be doing the same thing. And if they do, then there's no reason why we all can't move forward and make sure that we're taking care of America's business. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. at Federal Emergency Management Agency Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to H.J. Res. 59.

The President's News Conference
October 8, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I am eager to take your questions, so I'll try to be brief at the top.

This morning I had a chance to speak with Speaker Boehner, and I told him what I've been saying publicly, that I am happy to talk with him and other Republicans about anything, not just issues I think are important, but also issues that they think are important. But I also told him that having such a conversation, talks, negotiations, shouldn't require hanging the threats of a Government shutdown or economic chaos over the heads of the American people.

Think about it this way. The American people do not get to demand a ransom for doing their jobs. You don't get a chance to call your bank and say, "I'm not going to pay my mort-

gage this month unless you throw in a new car and an Xbox." If you're in negotiations around buying somebody's house, you don't get to say, "Well, let's talk about the price I'm going to pay, and if you don't give me the price, then I'm going to burn down your house."

That's not how negotiations work. That's not how it happens in business; it's not how it happens in private life. In the same way, Members of Congress—and the House Republicans, in particular—don't get to demand ransom in exchange for doing their jobs. And two of their very basic jobs are passing a budget and making sure that America is paying its bills.

They don't also get to say, "Unless you give me what the voters rejected in the last election, I'm going to cause a recession." That's not how it works. No American President would deal with a foreign leader like this. Most of you would not deal with either coworkers or business associates in this fashion, and we shouldn't be dealing this way here in Washington.

And I've heard Republicans suggest that, well, no, this is reasonable, this is entirely appropriate. But as I've said before, imagine if a Democratic Congress threatened to crash the global economy unless a Republican President agreed to gun background checks or immigration reform? I think it's fair to say that Republicans would not think that was appropriate.

So let's lift these threats from our families and our businesses, and let's get down to work.

It's not like this is a new position that I'm taking here. I had Speaker Boehner and the other leaders in just last week. Either my Chief of Staff or I have had serious conversations on the budget with Republicans more than 20 times since March. So we've been talking all kinds of business. What we haven't been able to get are serious positions from the Republicans that would allow us to actually resolve some core differences. And they have decided to run out the clock until there's a Government shutdown or the possibility of default, thinking that it would give them more leverage. That's not my characterization; they've said it themselves. That was their strategy from the start. And that is not how our Government is supposed to run.

It's not just me, by the way, who has taken the position that we're willing to have conversations about anything. Senate Democrats have asked to sit down with House Republicans and hash out a budget, but have been rejected by the House Republicans 19 times. At the beginning of this year, Speaker Boehner said, what we want is regular order and a serious budget process, so the Senate should pass a bill and the House should pass a bill. And then, a committee comes together and they hash out their differences, and they send a bill to the President. Well, that's exactly what Democrats did. Except, somewhere along the way, House Republicans decided they wouldn't appoint people to the committee to try to negotiate it. And 19 times, they've rejected that.

So even after all that, the Democrats in the Senate still passed a budget that effectively reflects Republican priorities, at Republican budget levels, just to keep the Government open. And the House Republicans couldn't do that either.

The point is, I think not only the White House, but also Democrats in the Senate and Democrats in the House have shown more than ample willingness to talk about any issues that the Republicans are concerned about. But we can't do it if the entire basis of the Republican strategy is, we're going to shut down the Government or cause economic chaos if we don't get 100 percent of what we want.

So my suggestion to the Speaker has been, and will continue to be, let's stop the excuses. Let's take a vote in the House. Let's end this shutdown right now. Let's put people back to work. There are enough reasonable Republicans and Democrats in the House who are willing to vote yes on a budget that the Senate has already passed. That vote could take place today. The shutdown would be over. Then, serious negotiations could proceed around every item in the budget.

Now, as soon as Congress votes to reopen the Government, it's also got to vote to meet our country's commitments—pay our bills; raise the debt ceiling. Because as reckless as a

Government shutdown is, the economic shutdown caused by America defaulting would be dramatically worse.

And I want to talk about this for a minute, because even though people can see and feel the effects of a Government shutdown—they're already experiencing it right now—there are still some people out there who don't believe that default is a real thing. And we've been hearing that from some Republicans in Congress, that default would not be a big deal. So let me explain this.

If Congress refuses to raise what's called the debt ceiling, America would not be able to meet all of our financial obligations for the first time in 225 years. And because it's called "raising the debt ceiling," I think a lot of Americans think it's raising our debt. It is not raising our debt. This does not add a dime to our debt. It simply says, you pay for what Congress has already authorized America to purchase. Whether that's the greatest military in the world or veterans benefits or Social Security—whatever it is that Congress has already authorized—what this does is make sure that we can pay those bills.

Now, the last time that the Tea Party Republicans flirted with the idea of default 2 years ago, markets plunged, business and consumer confidence plunged, America's credit rating was downgraded for the first time. And a decision to actually go through with it, to actually permit default, according to many CEOs and economists, would be—and I'm quoting here—"insane," "catastrophic," "chaos." These are some of the more polite words.

Warren Buffett likened default to a nuclear bomb, a weapon too horrible to use. It would disrupt markets. It would undermine the world's confidence in America as the bedrock of the global economy. And it might permanently increase our borrowing costs, which, of course, ironically, would mean that it would be more expensive for us to service what debt we do have, and it would add to our deficits and our debt, not decrease them. There's nothing fiscally responsible about that.

Now, preventing this should be simple. As I said, "raising the debt ceiling" is a lousy name, which is why Members of Congress in both parties don't like to vote on it, because it makes you vulnerable in political campaigns. But it does not increase our debt. It does not grow our deficits. It does not allow for a single dime of increased spending. All it does is allow the Treasury Department to pay for what Congress has already spent.

But as I said, it's always a tough vote. People don't like doing it, although it has been done 45 times since Ronald Reagan took office. Nobody in the past has ever seriously threatened to breach the debt ceiling until the last 2 years. And this is the creditworthiness of the United States that we're talking about. This is our word. This is our good name. This is real.

In a Government shutdown, millions of Americans face inconvenience or outright hardship. In an economic shutdown, every American could see their 401(k)s and home values fall; borrowing costs for mortgages and student loans rise. And there would be a significant risk of a very deep recession at a time when we're still climbing our way out of the worst recession in our lifetimes. The American people have already fought too hard and too long to come back from one crisis only to see a handful of more extreme Republicans in the House of Representatives precipitate another one.

Now, the good news is, over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created 7.5 million new jobs. Our housing market is healing. We've cut the deficit in half since I took office. The deficit is coming down faster than any time in the last 50 years. America is poised to become the number-one energy producer in the world this year. This year, for the first time in a very long time, we're producing more oil than we're importing.

So we've got a lot of good things going for us. But the uncertainty caused by just 1 week of this nonsense so far has caused businesses to reconsider spending and hiring. You've seen consumer confidence plunge to the lowest level since 2008. You've seen mortgages held up by thousands of home buyers who weren't sure about the economic situation out there. And all

this adds to our deficits; it doesn't subtract from it.

So we can't afford these manufactured crises every few months. And as I said, this one isn't even about deficits or spending or budgets. Our deficits are falling at the fastest pace in 60 years. The budget that the Senate passed is at Republican spending levels. It's their budget that Democrats were willing to put votes on just to make sure the Government was open while negotiations took place for a longer term budget.

And what's happened—the way we got to this point was one thing and one thing only, and that was Republican obsession with dismantling the Affordable Care Act and denying health care to millions of people. That law, ironically, is moving forward.

So most Americans—Democrats and Republicans—agree that health care should not have anything to do with keeping our Government open or paying our bills on time, which is why I will sit down and work with anyone of any party not only to talk about the budget, I'll talk about ways to improve the health care system. I'll talk about ways that we can shrink our long-term deficits. I'll also want to talk about how we're going to help the middle class and strengthen early childhood education and improve our infrastructure and research and development. There are a whole bunch of things I want to talk about in terms of how we're going to make sure that everybody is getting a fair shake in this society and that our economy is growing in a broad-based way and building our middle class.

And by the way, if anybody doubts my sincerity about that, I've put forward proposals in my budget to reform entitlement programs for the long haul and reform our Tax Code in a way that would close loopholes for the wealthiest and lower rates for corporations and help us invest in new jobs and reduce our deficits. And some of these were originally Republican proposals, because I don't believe any party has a monopoly on good ideas. So I've shown myself willing to go more than halfway in these conversations.

And if reasonable Republicans want to talk about these things again, I'm ready to head up to the Hill and try. I'll even spring for dinner again. But I'm not going to do it until the more extreme parts of the Republican Party stop forcing John Boehner to issue threats about our economy. We can't make extortion routine as part of our democracy. Democracy doesn't function this way.

And this is not just for me. It's also for my successors in office, whatever party they're from. They shouldn't have to pay a ransom either for Congress doing its basic job. We've got to put a stop to it.

Last point I'll make: Already this week, I had to miss critical meetings in Asia to promote American jobs and businesses. And although—as long as we get this fixed—that's not long-term damage, whenever we do these things, it hurts our credibility around the world. It makes it look like we don't have our act together. And that's not something we should welcome. The greatest nation on Earth shouldn't have to get permission from a few irresponsible Members of Congress every couple of months just to keep our Government open or to prevent an economic catastrophe.

So let's pass a budget. Let's end this Government shutdown. Let's pay our bills. Let's avert an economic shutdown. Let's drop the gimmicks, put aside what's good for any particular party, and let's focus on what's good for the American people, because they know we've got a lot of work to do.

All right? So with that, let me take a couple of questions, and I will start with Julie Pace of AP.

Bipartisanship/Federal Government Shutdown/Public Debt Limit

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Obviously, if Congress does pass a clean CR and a clean debt ceiling bill, those may just be short-term measures.

The President. Yes.

Q. If that happens, does your offer to negotiate with them on issues like health care and spending and deficit reduction still stand in the

intervening weeks if they pass measures that are just perhaps 6 weeks or 2 months long?

The President. Absolutely. I mean, what I've said is that I will talk about anything. What will happen is, we won't agree on everything. I mean, the truth is, is that the parties are pretty divided on a whole big—bunch of big issues right now. Everybody understands that. And by the way, voters are divided on a lot of those issues too. And I recognize that there are some House Members, Republican House Members, where I got clobbered in the last election, and they don't get politically rewarded a lot for being seen as negotiating with me. And that makes it harder for divided Government to come together.

But I am willing to work through all those issues. The only thing that our democracy can't afford is a situation where one side says, unless I get my way and only my way, unless I get concessions before we even start having a serious give-and-take, I'll threaten to shut down the Government or I will threaten to not pay America's bills.

So I will not eliminate any topic of conversation. And I've shown myself willing to engage all the parties involved, every leader, on any issue.

Q. And that applies no matter how long the time frame is on the debt ceiling bill that they would pass?

The President. The only thing that I will say is that we're not going to pay a ransom for America paying its bills. That's something that should be nonnegotiable. And everybody should agree on that. Everybody should say, one of the most valuable things we have is America's creditworthiness. This is not something we should even come close to fooling around with.

And so when I read people saying, "Oh, this wouldn't be a big deal, we should test it out." "Let's take default out for a spin and see how it rides." And I say, imagine in your private life if you decided that, I'm not going to pay my mortgage for a month or two. First of all, you're not saving money by not paying your mortgage; you're just a deadbeat. And you can anticipate that will hurt your credit, which means that in addition to debt collectors calling, you're going to have trouble borrowing in the future. And if you are able to borrow in the future, you're going to have to borrow at a higher rate.

Well, what's true for individuals is also true for nations, even the most powerful nation on Earth. And if we are creating an atmosphere in which people are not sure whether or not we pay our bills on time, then that will have a severe long-term impact on our economy and on America's standard of living. And that's not something that we should even be in a conversation about. That is not something that we should be using as leverage.

Okay. Julianna Goldman [Bloomberg News].

Public Debt Limit

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You laid out the economic consequences of default, but if we were to get to that point, would you prioritize and pay bondholders first to maintain the semblance of credit or—rather than Social Security recipients or military service men and women? And how would you go ahead and make that determination?

The President. I am going to continue to be very hopeful that Congress does not put us in that position. And I think if people understand what the consequences are, they will set that potential scenario aside.

I do know that there have been some who have said that if we just pay bondholders, if we just pay people who have bought Treasury bills, that we really won't be in default because those interest payments will be made. And to them, what I have to remind them is we've got a lot of other obligations, not just people who pay Treasury bills. We've got senior citizens who are counting on their Social Security check arriving on time. We have veterans who are disabled who are counting on their benefits. We have companies who are doing business for our Government and for our military that have payrolls that they have to meet, and if they do not get paid on time, they may have to lay off workers. All those folks are potentially affected if we are not able to pay all of our bills on time.

What's also true is if the markets are seeing that we're not paying all our bills on time, that will affect our creditworthiness even if some people are being paid on time. So again, just to boil this down to personal examples, if you've got a mortgage, a car note, and a student loan that you have to pay, and you say, well, I'm going to make sure I pay my mortgage, but I'm not going to pay my student loan or my car note, that's still going to have an impact on your credit. Everybody is still going to look at that and say, you know what, I'm not sure this person is that trustworthy. At a minimum, presumably, they're going to charge a higher interest rate. That's what would happen to you if you made those decisions. Well, the same is true for the Federal Government.

So we are exploring all contingencies. I know that Secretary Lew, the Secretary of the Treasury, will be appearing before Congress on Thursday, and he can address some of the additional details about this. But let me be clear: No option is good in that scenario. There's no silver bullet. There's no magic wand that allows us to wish away the chaos that could result if, for the first time in our history, we don't pay our bills on time.

And when I hear people trying to downplay the consequences of that, I think that's really irresponsible. And I'm happy to talk to any of them individually and walk them through exactly why it's irresponsible. And it's particularly funny coming from Republicans, who claim to be champions of business. There's no businessperson out here who thinks this wouldn't be a big deal. Not one. You go to anywhere from Wall Street to Main Street and you ask a CEO of a company, or ask a small-businessperson whether it would be a big deal if the United States Government isn't paying its bills on time, they'll tell you it's a big deal. It would hurt.

And it's unnecessary. That's the worst part of it. This is not a complicated piece of business. And there's no reason why, if in fact Republicans are serious about wanting to negotiate, wanting to have a conversation, wanting to talk, there's no reason why you have to have that threat looming over the conversations. I mean, think about it. The only reason that the Republicans have held out on negotiations up until the last week or so is because they thought it was a big enough deal that they would force unilateral concessions out of Democrats and out of me. They said so. They basically said, you know what, the President is so responsible that if we just hold our breath and say we're going to threaten default, then he'll give us what we want and we won't have to give anything in return. Again, that's not my account of the situation. You can read statements from Republicans over the last several months who said this explicitly.

And so for them now to say, well, it wouldn't be a big deal if it happens, that's not how they've been acting over the last couple months. And if it's not a big deal, then why would I give them concessions now to avoid it? It is a big deal. And nobody should be getting concessions for making sure that the full faith and credit of the United States is retained.

Sam Stein [Huffington Post].

Federal Government Shutdown/Government Spending Reductions/Head Start Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. With Speaker Boehner so far unwilling to hold a vote on a clean CR, what assurances can you give to those affected by a shutdown who are concerned about an even longer impasse? And how worried are you, personally, that your preferred solution to this is a clean CR at sequestration levels that may do harm to the Nation's economy and your second term agenda?

The President. Well, I mean, Sam, you're making an important point, which is, what we're asking of the Republicans right now is to keep the Government open at funding levels that Democrats think are very harmful to the economy and inadequate to make sure that the economy is growing faster, more people are put back to work, and the middle class is growing. We're willing to pass at least a short-term budget that opens up the Government at current funding levels. It doesn't even address the harm that's been done because of sequestration.

Now, the Democrats have a budget that would eliminate sequestration—this meat cleaver approach to deficit reduction—and make sure that we're adequately funding basic medical research and Head Start programs and VA programs and a whole range of things that have been really hard hit this year. But we recognize that there are going to have to be some compromises between the Democratic position and the Republican position. And in the meantime, we shouldn't hurt the economy even worse by shutting down the Government.

So let me just give you an example, very specific. Because of sequestration, because of the meat cleaver cuts that have been taking place over the course of this year, thousands of families have lost Head Start slots for their children. So you've had parents all across the country who've been scrambling trying to figure out how can I find some decent, quality childcare for my kids. Now, the Government shutdown means several thousand more are going to be losing their slots.

If we vote today or tomorrow or the next day in the House of Representatives to go ahead and reopen the Government, at least those additional several thousand people will be spared the difficulties of trying to scramble and figure out where your kid is going to be when you're trying to go to work. But it doesn't solve the broader problems. And if we were going to have real negotiations, the Democrats would say, let's solve the bigger problem: What about all those thousands who have been hurt by sequester?

The Democrats aren't making that demand right now. We understand there's going to have to be some give and take. What we are saying is, don't hurt more people while we're trying to resolve these differences; let's just at least make sure that we keep the lights on while we're having these conversations.

Backpay for Furloughed Federal Employees

Q. Do you support backpay for furloughed workers?

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Do you support backpay for furloughed Federal workers?

The President. Absolutely. I mean, that's how we've always done it.

Roberta Rampton [Reuters].

International Reaction to Potential U.S. Debt Default

Q. Thanks. You talked a bit about the hit to credibility around the world that this impasse has caused. I'm wondering what you and your administration are telling worried foreign creditors—China and Japan—who are calling and asking about whether the United States is going to avoid defaulting on its debt.

The President. Well, I won't disclose any specific conversations. But obviously, my message to the world is the United States always has paid its bills and it will do so again. But I think they're not just looking at what I say, they're looking at what Congress does. And that ultimately is up to Speaker Boehner.

This will not get resolved, we're not going to calm creditors until they see Speaker Boehner call up a bill that reopens the Government and authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to pay our bills on time. And until they see that, there's going to be a cloud over U.S. economic credibility.

But it is not one from which we can't recover. I mean, we've been through this before. Every country—every democracy, in particular—has tussles over the budget, and I think most world leaders understand it. They, themselves, have been through it if they're in a democracy. What you haven't seen before, I think, from the vantage point of a lot of world leaders is the notion that one party in Congress might blow the whole thing up if they don't get their way. They've never seen that before. And that does make them nervous, particularly given what happened in 2011.

I mean, keep in mind, we've been here before, right? We saw what happened in 2011. I think the assumption was that the Americans must have learned their lesson; that there would be budget conflicts, but nobody again would threaten the possibility that we would default. And when they hear Members of the Senate and Members of Congress saying, "Maybe default wouldn't be that bad," I'll bet

that makes them nervous. It makes me nervous.

It should make the American people nervous, because that's irresponsible. It is out of touch with reality. It is based on a flawed analysis of how our economy works. You cannot pay some bills and not others, and think somehow that the fact that you're paying some bills protects you from a loss of creditworthiness. That's not what happens in our own personal lives. I don't know why people think that that's how it works for the United States Government.

President's Authority To Raise Public Debt Limit

Q. Do you think you might have emergency powers that you could use after any default situation?

The President. We have used a lot of our emergency powers. Jack Lew has used extraordinary measures to keep paying our bills over the last several months. But at a certain point, those emergency powers run out, and the clock is ticking. And I do worry that Republicans, but also some Democrats, may think that we've got a bunch of other rabbits in our hat. There comes a point in which, if the Treasury cannot hold auctions to sell Treasury bills, we do not have enough money coming in to pay all our bills on time. It's very straightforward.

And I know there's been some discussion, for example, about my powers under the 14th Amendment to go ahead and ignore the debt ceiling law. Setting aside the legal analysis, what matters is, is that if you start having a situation in which there's legal controversy about the U.S. Treasury's authority to issue debt, the damage will have been done even if that were constitutional, because people wouldn't be sure. It would be tied up in litigation for a long time. That's going to make people nervous.

So a lot of the strategies that people have talked about—well, the President can roll out a big coin, or he can resort to some other constitutional measure—what people ignore is that, ultimately, what matters is, what do the people who are buying Treasury bills think?

And again, I'll just boil it down in very personal terms. If you're buying a house and you're not sure whether the seller has title to the house, you're going to be pretty nervous about buying it. And at minimum, you'd want a much cheaper price to buy that house because you wouldn't be sure whether or not you're going to own it at the end. Most of us would just walk away, because no matter how much we like the house, we'd say to ourselves, the last thing I want is to find out after I've bought it that I don't actually own it.

Well, the same thing is true if I'm buying Treasury bills from the U.S. Government. And here I am sitting here, what if there's a Supreme Court case deciding that these aren't valid, that these aren't valid legal instruments obligating the U.S. Government to pay me? I'm going to be stressed, which means I may not purchase them. And if I do purchase them, I'm going to ask for a big premium.

So there are no magic bullets here. There's one simple way of doing it, and that is Congress going ahead and voting. And the fact that right now there are votes, I believe, to go ahead and take this drama off the table should at least be tested. Speaker Boehner keeps on saying he doesn't have the votes for it, and what I've said is, put it on the floor, see what happens, and at minimum, let every Member of Congress be on record. Let them vote to keep the Government open or not, and they can determine where they stand and defend that vote to their constituencies. And let them vote on whether or not America should pay its bills or not.

And if in fact some of these folks really believe that it's not that big of a deal, they can vote no, and that will be useful information for voters to have. And if it fails, and we do end up defaulting, I think voters should know exactly who voted not to pay our bills so that they can be responsible for the consequences that come with it.

Ari Shapiro [NPR].

Campaign Finance Laws

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the Supreme Court, and the term started today with the campaign finance case that sort of picks up where *Citizens United* left off.

You've called *Citizens United* "devastating to the public interest," so I wonder if you could weigh in on this latest case.

The President. Well, the latest case would go even further than *Citizens United*. I mean, essentially it would say anything goes, there are no rules in terms of how to finance campaigns. There aren't a lot of functioning democracies around the world that work this way, where you can basically have millionaires and billionaires bankrolling whoever they want, however they want, in some cases undisclosed. And what it means is ordinary Americans are shut out of the process.

And Democrats aren't entirely innocent of this in the past. And I had to raise a lot of money for my campaign, so I—there's nobody who operates in politics that has perfectly clean hands on this issue. But what is also true is that all of us should bind ourselves to some rules that say the people who vote for us should be more important than somebody who's spending a million dollars, $10 million, or $100 million dollars to help us get elected. Because we don't know what their agendas are, we don't know what their interests are.

And I continue to believe that *Citizens United* contributed to some of the problems we're having in Washington right now. You have some ideological extremist who has a big bankroll, and they can entirely skew our politics. And there are a whole bunch of Members of Congress right now who privately will tell you, "I know our positions are unreasonable, but we're scared that if we don't go along with the Tea Party agenda or some particularly extremist agenda that we'll be challenged from the right." And the threats are very explicit, and so they toe the line. And that's part of why we've seen a breakdown of just normal, routine business done here in Washington on behalf of the American people.

And all of you know it. I mean, I'm not telling you anything you don't know, because it's very explicit. You report on it. A big chunk of the Republican Party right now is—are in gerrymandered districts where there's no competition, and those folks are much more worried about a Tea Party challenger than they are about a general election where they've got to compete against a Democrat or go after Independent votes. And in that environment, it's a lot harder for them to compromise.

Mark Landler [New York Times].

Cancellation of the President's Travel to Asia/Federal Government Shutdown/Public Debt Limit

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. This week, the President of China has visited several of the Asian countries that you were going to visit and have had to skip because of the shutdown.

The President. Right.

Q. He's also taken a big role at the two regional summits, both of which your administration has made a pretty big priority of as part of the broader Asia pivot. Does China benefit from the chaos in Washington? And then, more broadly, you've said in general that this hurts the reputation of the United States overseas. Are there specific things that you can point to where you already have seen some damage? And one that occurs to me is the trade deal that you've tried to do in Asia. The leaders today announced that they still want to wrap it up, but they no longer are able to say they want to wrap it up by the end of this year. Had you been there, do you think you could have gotten that additional push?

The President. I think that's a great example, and we don't know, but it didn't help that I wasn't there to make sure that we went ahead and closed a trade deal that would open up markets and create jobs for the United States and make sure that countries were trading fairly with us in the most dynamic, fastest growing market in the world. I should have been there.

But I can tell you—because I had to apologize to some of the host countries—that they understood that the most important thing I can do for them, and the most important thing I can do for the bilateral relationship and America's reputation, is making sure that we reopen our Government and we don't default.

So I don't think it's going to do lasting damage. As I said, if we deal with this the way we should, then folks around the world will attribute this to the usual messy process of Ameri-

can democracy, but it doesn't do lasting damage.

In the short term, I would characterize it as missed opportunities. We continue to be the one indispensable nation. There are countries across Asia who have welcomed our pivot because they want to do business with us. They admire our economy. They admire our entrepreneurs. They know that their growth is going to be contingent on working with us. They care about the security environment that we've maintained—helped maintain, and the freedom of navigation and commerce that is so important to them. So it's not as if they've got other places to go. They want us to be there, and they want to work with us.

But in each of these big meetings that we have around the world, a lot of business gets done. And in the same way that a CEO of a company, if they want to close a deal, aren't going to do it by phone, they want to show up and look at somebody eye to eye and tell them why it's important and shake hands on a deal, the same thing is true with respect to world leaders.

And the irony is our teams probably do more to organize a lot of these multilateral forums and set the agenda than anybody. I mean, we end up being engaged much more than China, for example, in setting the agenda and moving this stuff forward. And so when—it's almost like me not showing up to my own party. I think it creates a sense of concern on the part of other leaders. But as long as we get through this, they'll understand it, and we'll be able to, I believe, still get these deals done.

The last point I'd make, though, is we can't do it every 3 months. Right? Back in the nineties, we had a Government shutdown. That happened one time, and then after that, the Republican Party and Mr. Gingrich realized this isn't a sensible way to do business, that we shouldn't engage in brinksmanship like this, and then they started having a serious conversation with President Clinton about a whole range of issues. And they got some things that they wanted. They had to give the Democrats some things that the Democrats wanted. But it took on a sense of normal Democratic process.

So here we already went through this once back in 2011. And then, at the end of last year, right after my election, we went through something similar with the so-called fiscal cliff, where Republicans wouldn't negotiate about taxes, despite the fact that taxes actually went up anyway, even though they refused to negotiate. And they could actually have gotten some things from us that they wanted if they had been willing to engage in normal negotiations.

So we've got to stop repeating this pattern. I know the American people are tired of it. And to all the American people, I apologize that you have to go through this stuff every 3 months, it seems like. And Lord knows I'm tired of it. But at some point, we've got to kind of break these habits and get back to the point where everybody understands that in negotiations there is give and there is take, and you do not hold people hostage or engage in ransom-taking to get 100 percent of your way.

And you don't suggest that somehow a health care bill that you don't agree with is destroying the Republic or is a grand socialist scheme. If you disagree with certain aspects of it, tell us what you disagree with, and let's work on it. If you're concerned about long-term debt, that's a good thing to be concerned about, but don't pretend as if America is going bankrupt at a time when the deficits have been cut in half.

That's what the American people, I think, expect, is just civility, common sense, give and take, compromise. Those aren't dirty words. There's nothing wrong with them. And I think the American people understand I may—not I "may"—I have flaws. Michelle will tell you. One of them is not that I'm unwilling to compromise. I've been willing to compromise my entire political career. And I don't believe that I have the answers to everything and it's my way or the highway. But I'm not going to breach a basic principle that would weaken the Presidency, change our democracy, and do great damage to ordinary people, just in order to go along with what the House Republicans are talking about.

Cancellation of the President's Travel to Asia/China-U.S. Trade Relations

Q. Sir, just one follow-up: I did ask specifically about China, and I'm wondering whether—to what extent is our loss their gain.

The President. I'm sure the Chinese don't mind that I'm not there right now in the sense that there are areas where we have differences and they can present their point of view and not get as much of a pushback as if I were there—although Secretary of State Kerry is there, and I'm sure he's doing a great job.

But I've also said that our cooperation with China is not a zero-sum game. There are a lot of areas where the Chinese and us agree. On trade, in particular, though, here is an area where part of what we're trying to do is raise standards for, for example, intellectual property protection, which sometimes is a big problem in China. And if we can get a trade deal with all the other countries in Asia that says you've got to protect people's intellectual property, that will help us in our negotiations with China.

Richard McGregor [Financial Times].

Q. Up here.

The President. There you go, Rick.

Public Debt Limit

Q. Could I go back to the issue of debt privatization?

The President. Yes.

Q. What are your legal liabilities—[*inaudible*]—what is your legal advice? That foreign creditors must be paid first, particularly as it's a sovereign credit issue, or——

The President. Richard, you know what I'm going to do is I'm going to let Jack Lew, the Secretary of the Treasury, make a formal presentation on Thursday before the Senate committee, because this is obviously sensitive enough, and I think people would be paying close enough attention, that details count. And I think prepared remarks from Secretary Lew on that topic would probably be more appropriate.

But as I indicated before, we plan for every contingency. So obviously, worst-case scenario, there are things that we will try to do. But I will repeat: I don't think any option is good.

Steven Dennis [Roll Call].

Federal Government Shutdown/Public Debt Limit

Q. Mr. President, I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about budget process. In the past, you've negotiated along with the debt ceiling with the Blue Dogs, for instance, in 2009, 2010—along with a debt ceiling increase then. Pay-as-you-go reform, you named a fiscal commission. The Republicans today are talking about maybe another committee that would work out our differences over the next few weeks. Is that something that you could talk about on the side, something that wouldn't necessarily be a concession, but something that would be a format for getting a deal done?

The President. Yes, here's the thing, Steven. I know that Speaker Boehner has talked about setting up some new process or some new supercommittee or what have you. The leaders up in Congress, they can work through whatever processes they want. But the bottom line is either you're having good-faith negotiations in which there's give and take, or you're not.

Now, there is already a process in place called the Budget Committees that could come together right now—Democrats have been asking for 19 months to bring them together—make a determination how much should the Government be spending next year. The Appropriations Committees could go through the list, and here's how much we're going to be spending for defense and here's how much we're going to be spending for education. And that's a process that's worked reasonably well for the last 50 years. I don't know that we need to set up a new committee for a process like that to move forward.

What has changed, or what seems to be motivating the idea we have to have a new process is, Speaker Boehner, or at least some faction of the Republicans in the House and maybe some in the Senate, are holding out for a negotiation in theory, but in fact, basically, Democrats give a lot of concessions to Republicans, Republicans don't give anything, and then that's

dubbed as compromise. And the reason that Democrats have to give is because they're worried that the Government is going to stay shut down or the U.S. Government is going to default.

And again, that—you can dress it up any way you want. If that's the theory that the Republicans are going forward with, then it's not going to work.

So let me just give you one specific example. I've heard at least—and I can't confirm this—that one of the ideas of this new committee is, you could talk about reductions in discretionary spending, you could talk about entitlement reform and reductions in mandatory spending, you could talk about how long you'd extend the debt ceiling, but you couldn't talk about closing corporate loopholes that aren't benefiting ordinary folks economically and, potentially, if you closed them, would allow us to pay for things like better education for kids.

Well, I don't know why Democrats right now would agree to a format that takes off the table all the things they care about and is confined to the things that the Republicans care about.

So again, I don't know that that's exactly what's being proposed. My simple point is this: I think Democrats in the Senate and the House are prepared to talk about anything. I'm prepared to talk about anything. They can design whatever formats they want. What is not fair and will not result in an actual deal is ransom-taking or hostage-taking, and the expectation that Democrats are paying ransom or providing concessions for the mere act of reopening the Government or paying our bills. Those are not things that you do for me, and they're not things that you do for the Democrats.

Q. But is there room here where it's not necessarily a concession; where it is you would negotiate what the negotiations are going to look like? You don't have to agree to overturn Obamacare, but you can actually negotiate what the talks are going to look like so everybody is comfortable. And you know, you've mentioned yourself, this is a tough vote for all these House Republicans. You're asking them to take a very tough vote for the debt ceiling. Usually, people in both parties want to have some cover, something that they can point to and say——

The President. Which is fine.

Q. ——"Hey, I want some budget process reform——

The President. Yes, yes.

Q. ——before I approve another trillion dollars in debt."

The President. Which is fine. And so if they want to do that, reopen the Government, extend the debt ceiling. If they can't do it for a long time, do it for the period of time in which these negotiations are taking place. Why is it that we've got hundreds of thousands of people who aren't working right now in order for what you just described to occur? That doesn't make any sense.

The Small Business Administration gives out a billion dollars' worth of loans every month to small businesses all across the country. That's not happening right now. So there are small businesses in every State that are counting on a loan to get their business going, and you've got the party of small business saying, the Small Business Administration can't do it—that's what they call themselves. And yet they're suffering.

You've got farmers who are waiting for loans right now. Those loans cannot be processed. The Republican Party says they're the party that looks out for farmers. I happen to disagree; I think farmers have done real good under my administration, but having said that, why would you keep the Government shut down and those farmers not getting their loans while we're having the discussions that you just talked about?

The Republicans say they're very concerned about drilling. They say, Obama has been restricting oil production, despite the fact that oil production is at its highest levels that it's been in years and is continuing to zoom up. But they say the Democrats are holding back oil production in this country. Well, one of the things that happens when the Government shut down is, new drilling permits aren't processed. So why would the Republicans say to the folks who are interested in drilling for oil, sorry, we can't let

those things be processed until we have some negotiations and we have some cover to do what we're supposed to be doing anyway? That doesn't make sense.

If there's a way to solve this, it has to include reopening the Government and saying America is not going to default, it's going to pay our bills. They can attach some process to that that gives them some certainty that, in fact, the things they're concerned about will be topics of negotiation, if my word is not good enough, but I've told them I'm happy to talk about it. But if they want to specify all the items that they think need to be a topic of conversation, happy to do it.

If they want to say part of that process is we're going to go through line by line all the aspects of the President's health care plan that we don't like and we want the President to answer for those things, I'm happy to sit down with them for as many hours as they want. I won't let them gut a law that is going to make sure tens of millions of people actually get health care, but I'm happy to talk about it. All right?

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you a question about——

The President. Stephen Collinson [Agence France-Presse].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I'm just going through my list, guys. Talk to Jay. [*Laughter*]

U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy/U.S. Counterterrorism Operations in Libya and Somalia

Q. The operations in Africa this weekend suggest that the continent is now the central front in the campaign against terrorism, and if we're going to see U.S. military operations all around the continent, how does that square with your contention that American cannot be at war forever?

The President. Well, if you look at the speech I gave at the National Defense College several months ago, I outlined how I saw the shift in terrorism around the world and what we have to do to respond to it. And part of what I said is, is that we had decimated core Al Qaida that had been operating primarily between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but you now had these regional groups, some of which are explicitly tied to Al Qaida or that ideology, some of which are more localized. Few of them have the ability to project beyond their borders, but they can do a lot of damage inside their borders.

And Africa is one of the places where, because, in some cases, a lack of capacity on the part of the Governments, in some cases because it is easier for folks to hide out in vast terrains that are sparsely populated, that you're seeing some of these groups gather. And we're going to have to continue to go after them.

But there's a difference between us going after terrorists who are plotting directly to do damage to the United States and us being involved in wars. The risks of terrorism and terrorist networks are going to continue for some time to come. We've got to have a long-term plan that is not just military based, we've got to engage in a war of ideas in the region and engage with Muslim countries and try to isolate radical elements that are doing more damage to Muslims than they're doing to anybody else. We've got to think about economic development, because although there's not a direct correlation between terrorism and the economy, there's no doubt that if you've got a lot of unemployed, uneducated young men in societies, that there's a greater likelihood that terrorist recruits are available.

But where you've got active plots and active networks, we're going to go after them. We prefer partnering with countries where this is taking place wherever we can, and we want to build up their capacity. But we're not going to farm out our defense.

And I have to say, by the way, the operations that took place both in Libya and Somalia were examples of the extraordinary skill and dedication and talent of our men and women in the Armed Forces. They do their jobs extremely well, with great precision, at great risk to themselves. And I think they are pretty good examples for how those of us here in Washington should operate as well.

October 5 Capture of Suspected Al Qaida Operative Abu Anas al-Libi by U.S. Special Forces in Libya

Q. Mr. President, did the capture of Mr. Libi comply with international law?

The President. We know that Mr. al-Libi planned and helped to execute plots that killed hundreds of people, a whole lot of Americans. And we have strong evidence of that. And he will be brought to justice.

Mark Knoller [CBS News].

Federal Government Shutdown

Q. Mr. President, while you're waiting for the shutdown to end, why is it that you can't go along with any of the bills the House is passing funding the FDA and FEMA—where you were yesterday—and veterans benefits and Head Start? You've got to be tempted to sign those bills and get funding to those programs that you support.

The President. Of course, I'm tempted, because you'd like to think that you could solve at least some of the problem if you couldn't solve all of it. But here's the problem. What you've seen are bills that come up where, wherever Republicans are feeling political pressure, they put a bill forward. And if there's no political heat, if there's no television story on it, then nothing happens. And if we do some sort of shotgun approach like that, then you'll have some programs that are highly visible get funded and reopened, like national monuments, but things that don't get a lot of attention, like those SBA loans, not being funded.

And we don't get to select which programs we implement or not. There are a whole bunch of things that the Republicans have said are law that we have to do. And I don't get a chance to go back and say, you know what, this cockamamie idea that this Republican Congressman came up with, I really don't like, so let's not implement that. Once you have a budget and a Government with a set of functions, you make sure that it's all operating. We don't get to pick and choose based on which party likes what.

So that's where the budget discussions take place. Now, if there are some things that the Republicans don't like, they should argue for eliminating those programs in the budget, come up with an agreement with the Democrats. Maybe the Democrats will agree and those things won't be funded. But you don't do a piecemeal approach like that when you're dealing with a Government shutdown. Okay?

Q. Mr. President, would you be willing——

[*At this point, several reporters began shouting questions.*]

The President. I'm going to take one more question. And right here, you've been—your hand—persistence has worked. [*Laughter*]

Lessons Learned From 2011 Budget Negotiations

Q. Persistence pays off, yes. Mr. President, you've talked about the political dynamics that leave House Republicans feeling that they don't want to negotiate with you, they don't want to come together. I wanted to ask you two things about that. Looking back at the 2011 default discussions and the budget drama, is there anything that you wish that you had done differently in 2011? And after this, what you call this nonsense, has ended, what do you expect the political dynamics might—how will they have changed to move forward?

The President. Well, I think it's an interesting question. In 2011, I entered into good-faith negotiations with John Boehner. He had just won the Speakership. It was at a time when, because we were still responding to the recession, deficits were high, people were concerned about it, and I thought it was my obligation to meet him halfway. And so we had a whole series of talks. And at that point, at least, nobody had any belief that people would come close to potential default.

I don't regret having entered into those negotiations, and we came fairly close. And whenever I see John Boehner to this day, I still say, you should have taken the deal that I offered you back then, which would have dealt with our long-term deficit problems, would not

have impeded growth as much, would have really boosted confidence. But at that time, I think House Republicans had just taken over. They were feeling their oats and thinking, we don't have to compromise. And we came pretty close to default, and we saw the impact of that.

I would have thought that they would have learned the lesson from that, as I did, which is, we can't put the American people and our economy through that ringer again. So that's the reason why I've been very clear, we're not going to negotiate around the debt ceiling. That has to be dealt with in a reasonable fashion.

And by the way, I often hear people say, well, in the past, it has been dealt with all the time. The truth of the matter is, if you look at the history, people posture about the debt ceiling frequently, but the way the debt ceiling often got passed was, you'd stick the debt ceiling onto a budget negotiation once it was completed. Because people figured, well, I don't want to take a bunch of tough votes to cut programs or raise taxes and then also have to take a debt ceiling vote, let me do it all at once.

But it wasn't a situation in which, what if I don't get what I want, then I'm going to let us default. That's what's changed. And that's what we learned in 2011. And so, as a consequence, I said we're not going to do that again, not just for me, but because future Presidents, Republican or Democrat, should not be in a position where they have to choose between making sure the economy stays afloat and we avoid worldwide catastrophe or we provide concessions to one faction of one party in one House.

But let me tell you a lesson I did not learn. I did not learn a lesson that we shouldn't compromise. I still think we should. I still think there are all kinds of issues that we should be talking about, and I don't expect to get 100 percent of my way. And I'm still very open to having conversations with not just the Speaker, but any Republican over there.

So—go ahead.

Federal Government Shutdown/Public Debt Limit

Q. Just to clarify this, if you enter into a series of short-term funding bills or a debt ceiling bill, you will be back in the same place, presumably, with these—the same Members of Congress.

The President. Yes, I think that——

Q. So what has changed in the political dynamic if you do the short-term——

The President. Well, I think what has changed is they're aware of the fact that I'm not budging when it comes to the full faith and credit of the United States; that that has to be dealt with; that you don't pay a ransom; you don't provide concessions for Congress doing its job and America paying its bills.

And I think most people understand that. I was at a small business the other day and talking to a bunch of workers, and I said, when you're at the plant and you're in the middle of your job, do you ever say to your boss, you know what, unless I get a raise right now and more vacation pay, I'm going to just shut down the plant; I'm not just going to walk off the job, I'm going to break the equipment? I said, how do you think that would go? They all thought they'd be fired.

And I think most of us think that. There's nothing wrong with asking for a raise or asking for more time off, but you can't burn down the plant or your office if you don't get your way. Well, the same thing is true here. And I think most Americans understand that. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:15 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newton L. Gingrich. He also referred to H.J. Res. 59. A reporter referred to President Xi Jinping of China.

Remarks on the Nomination of Janet L. Yellen To Be Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

October 9, 2013

The President. Good afternoon. Over the past 5 years, America has fought its way back from the worst recession since the Great Depression. We've passed historic reforms to prevent another crisis and to protect consumers. Over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created 7.5 million new jobs. Our housing market is rebounding. Manufacturing is growing. The auto industry has come roaring back. And since I took office, we've cut the deficit in half.

I think everybody understands we've still got a lot of work to do to rebuild the middle class, but we've made progress. And we shouldn't do anything to threaten that progress, for these hard-won gains have made a difference to millions of Americans. And in part, we can thank the extraordinary grit and resilience of the American people; in part, we can thank the dynamism of our businesses. But a lot of it also has to do with the choices we've made as a nation to create more jobs and more growth. And one of the most important contributors to this whole process has been the Federal Reserve under the strong leadership of Ben Bernanke.

For nearly 8 years, Ben has led the Fed through some of the most daunting economic challenges of our lifetime. For some time now, he's made it clear that he intends to finish his service as Chairman at the end of his term, which is this January. So today I just want to take a minute to pay tribute to Ben for his extraordinary service. But I also want to announce my choice for the next Chair of the Federal Reserve—one of the Nation's foremost economists and policymakers—current Vice Chairman Janet Yellen.

After I became President, I was proud to nominate Ben for a second term. And while the Fed is, and must always be, independent, I want you to know, Ben, I'm personally very grateful to you for being such a strong partner in helping America recover from recession.

Perhaps it's no surprise—as the son of a pharmacist and a schoolteacher—that Ben Bernanke is the epitome of calm. And against the volatility of global markets, he's been a voice of wisdom and a steady hand. At the same time, when faced with a potential global economic meltdown, he has displayed tremendous courage and creativity. He took bold action that was needed to avert another depression: helping us stop the free fall, stabilize financial markets, shore up our banks, get credit flowing again.

And all this has made a profound difference in the lives of millions of Americans. A lot of people aren't necessarily sure what the Chairman of the Federal Reserve does, but thanks to this man to the left of me, more families are able to afford their own home, more small businesses are able to get loans to expand and hire workers, more folks can pay their mortgages and their car loans. It's meant more growth and more jobs.

And I'd add that with his commitment to greater transparency and clarity, he's also allowed us to better understand the work of the Fed. Ben has led a new era of "Fedspeak" and been a little more clear about how the system works. And that is good for our democracy.

And I have to tell you, as I travel around the world, the job of the Fed Chair is not just our top monetary policymaker. The world looks to the American Fed Chair for leadership and guidance. And the degree to which Ben is admired and respected and the degree to which central bankers all across the world look to him for sound advice and smart policymaking is remarkable. He has truly been a stabilizing force not just for our country, but for the entire world. And I could not be more grateful for his extraordinary service.

And so, Ben, to you and your wife Anna and your children Joel and Alyssa, I want to thank you for your outstanding service. Thank you so much.

Now, as I've said, the decision on who will succeed Ben is one of the most important economic decisions that I'll make as President—one of the most important appointments that

any President can make—because the Chair of the Fed is one of the most important policymakers in the world, and the next Chair will help guide our economy after I've left office.

Now, I've considered a lot of factors. Foremost among them is an understanding of the Fed's dual mandate: sound monetary policy to make sure that we keep inflation in check, but also increasing employment and creating jobs, which remains our most important economic challenge right now.

And I've found these qualities in Janet Yellen. She's a proven leader, and she's tough, not just because she's from Brooklyn. [*Laughter*] Janet is exceptionally well qualified for this role. She's served in leadership positions at the Fed for more than a decade. As Vice Chair for the past 3 years, she's been exemplary and a driving force of policies to help boost our economic recovery.

Janet is renowned for her good judgment. She sounded the alarm early about the housing bubble, about excesses in the financial sector, and about the risks of a major recession. She doesn't have a crystal ball, but what she does have is a keen understanding about how markets and the economy work, not just in theory, but also in the real world. And she calls it like she sees it.

Janet also knows how to build consensus. She listens to competing views and brings people together around a common goal. And as one of her admirers says, "She's the kind of person who makes everybody around her better." Not surprisingly, she is held in high esteem by colleagues across the country and around the world who look to the United States, as I said, and the Fed for leadership.

Janet is committed to both sides of the Fed's dual mandate, and she understands the necessity of a stable financial system where we move ahead with the reforms that we've begun: to protect consumers, to ensure that no institution is too big to fail, and to make sure that taxpayers are never again held—left holding the bag because of the mistakes of the reckless few.

And at the same time, she's committed to increasing employment, and she understands the human costs when Americans can't find a job. She's said before: "These are not just statistics to me. The toll is simply terrible on the mental and physical health of workers, on their marriages, on their children." So Janet understands this. And America's workers and their families will have a champion in Janet Yellen.

So, Janet, I thank you for taking on this new assignment. And given the urgent economic challenges facing our Nation, I urge the Senate to confirm Janet without delay. I am absolutely confident that she will be an exceptional Chair of the Federal Reserve. I should add that she'll be the first woman to lead the Fed in its 100-year history. And I know a lot of Americans—men and women—thank you for not only your example and your excellence, but also being a role model for a lot of folks out there.

It's been said that Janet found love at the Federal Reserve, literally. [*Laughter*] This is where she met her husband George, a celebrated economist in his own right. And their son Robert is an economist as well. So you can imagine, the conversation around the dinner table might be a little different than ours. [*Laughter*] In fact, I've been told their idea of a great family vacation is the beach with a suitcase full of economics books. [*Laughter*] But this is a family affair. We thank George and Robert for their support as Janet begins this journey.

Again, I want to thank Ben Bernanke for the outstanding work that he's done, and obviously, he will continue to help keep our economy moving forward during the remainder of his tenure here. So we'll probably have occasion for additional good-byes. And I know that Janet is very much counting on him to give some good advice to her as she moves into the Chairman spot.

But with this, I'd like to give Janet a chance to say a few words.

Chair-designate Yellen. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm honored and humbled by the faith that you've placed in me. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge to do my utmost to keep that trust and meet the great responsibilities that Congress has entrusted to the Federal Reserve: to promote maximum employment, sta-

ble prices, and a strong and stable financial system.

I'd also like to thank my spouse George and my son Robert. I couldn't imagine taking on this new challenge without their love and support.

The past 6 years have been tumultuous for the economy and challenging for many Americans. While I think we all agree, Mr. President, that more needs to be done to strengthen the recovery, particularly for those hardest hit by the great recession, we have made progress. The economy is stronger and the financial system sounder.

As you said, Mr. President, considerable credit for that goes to Chairman Bernanke, for his wise, courageous and skillful leadership. It has been my privilege to serve with him and learn from him.

While we have made progress, we have farther to go. The mandate of the Federal Reserve is to serve all the American people, and too many Americans still can't find a job and worry how they'll pay their bills and provide for their families. The Federal Reserve can help if it does its job effectively. We can help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to work hard and build a better life. We can ensure that inflation remains in check and doesn't undermine the benefits of a growing economy.

We can and must safeguard the financial system. The Fed has powerful tools to influence the economy and the financial system. But I believe its greatest strength rests in its capacity to approach important decisions with expertise and objectivity, to vigorously debate diverse views, and then to unite behind its response.

The Fed's effectiveness depends on the commitment, ingenuity, and integrity of the Fed staff and my fellow policymakers. They serve America with great dedication.

Mr. President, thank you for giving me this opportunity to continue serving the Federal Reserve and carrying out its important work on behalf of the American people.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Edna Friedman Bernanke, mother of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke; and George Akerlof, husband, and Robert Akerlof, son, of Chair-designate Yellen.

The President's Weekly Address
October 12, 2013

Good morning. Over the past few days, I've met with Republicans and Democrats from both Houses of Congress in an effort to reopen your Government and remove the dangers of default from our economy.

It's a positive development that House Republicans have agreed on the need to avoid the economic consequences of not meeting our country's commitments. Because once the debt ceiling is raised and the shutdown is over, there's a lot we can accomplish together.

We've created 7½ million new jobs in the past 3½ years. Now let's create more. We've cut our deficits in half over the past 4 years. Now let's do it in a smarter, balanced way that lets us afford to invest in the things we need to grow.

The truth is, there's a lot we can agree on. But one thing we have to agree on is that there is no good reason anyone should keep suffering through this shutdown. I met with some really innovative small-business owners on Friday who've already lost contracts, lost customers, and put hiring on hold because the pain of this Republican shutdown has trickled down to their bottom lines. It's hurting the very citizens that our Government exists to serve. That's why a growing number of reasonable Republicans say it should end now.

And it wouldn't be wise, as some suggest, to just kick the debt ceiling can down the road for a couple months and flirt with a first-ever intentional default right in the middle of the holiday shopping season. Because damage to America's sterling credit rating wouldn't just

cause global markets to go haywire. It would become more expensive for everyone in America to borrow money: students paying for college, newlyweds buying a home. It would amount to a new tax—a Republican default tax—on every family and business in America.

It doesn't have to be this way. It's not supposed to be this way. Manufacturing crises to extract massive concessions isn't how our democracy works, and we have to stop it. Politics is a battle of ideas, but you advance those ideas through elections and legislation, not extortion.

I know you're frustrated by what you see in your Nation's Capital right now. But because it's easy to get lost in or give up on the political back-and-forth, I want you to remember: This is not normal. Our Government is closed for the first time in 17 years. A political party is risking default for the first time since the 1700s. This is not normal, and that's why we have to put a stop to it. Not only because it's dangerous, but because it saps everyone's faith in our extraordinary system of self-government. And that hurts us all.

Whether it's the work of creating jobs, growing the economy, or getting our fiscal house in order for the long haul, we've got a lot of work to do, and constant brinksmanship doesn't let us do it. It inflicts real pain on real people. It creates spasms of uncertainty for business owners. It threatens our Nation's credit and standing in the world. And the longer it goes on—the more frequently this brinksmanship is inflicted—the more we'll see markets react, businesses put off plans to spend and hire, and unemployment claims tick up. The hundreds of thousands of hard-working civil servants who go even longer without pay will worry that they won't be able to cover their bills and that their own creditworthiness will be ruined for no good reason at all.

And I want to thank all the neighbors and local business owners who've shown acts of kindness to these Americans who serve their country. I ask that same spirit of citizenship from lenders who do business with these folks, because they're being punished enough through no fault of their own.

So let's pass a budget, put people back to work, and end this Republican shutdown. Let's pay our bills and prevent an economic shutdown. Then, let's get back to the work of the American people. Because there is so much else we should be focusing our energies on right now. We've got to create more jobs. We've got kids to educate. We've got an immigration system to fix. We've got more troops to bring home and a middle class to rebuild and opportunity to restore. There's so much America has going for it in this new century. And as always, this country works better when we work together.

Thank you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:55 p.m. on October 11 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on October 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 12.

Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Captain William D. Swenson
October 15, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House.

Last month, the United States Army released a remarkable piece of video. It's from the combat helmet cameras of a medevac helicopter crew in Afghanistan. And it's shaky, and it's grainy, but it takes us to the front lines that our troops face every single day, and it's useful to remember that there is still a whole lot of our troops in Afghanistan in harm's way. In that video, as the helicopter touches down by a remote village, you see, out of a cloud of dust, an American soldier. He's without his helmet, standing in the open, exposing himself to enemy fire, standing watch over a severely wounded soldier.

He helps carry that wounded soldier to the helicopter and places him inside. And then,

amidst the whipping wind and the deafening roar of the helicopter blades, he does something unexpected. He leans in and kisses the wounded soldier on the head, a simple act of compassion and loyalty to a brother in arms. And as the door closes and the helicopter takes off, he turns and goes back the way he came, back into the heat of battle.

In our Nation's history, we have presented our highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, nearly 3,500 times for actions above and beyond the call of duty. But this may be the first time that we can actually bear witness to a small fraction of those actions for ourselves. And today we honor the American in that video—the soldier who went back in—Captain William Swenson.

And not far away that day was then-Corporal Dakota Meyer, to whom we presented the Medal of Honor 2 years ago. Today is only the second time in nearly half a century that the Medal of Honor has been awarded to two survivors of the same battle. Dakota is not here today, but I wanted to welcome some of the soldiers and marines who fought alongside both these men—and the families of those who gave their lives that day.

I want to welcome all of our distinguished guests, including members of the Medal of Honor Society, whose ranks today grow by one more. Most of all, I want to welcome Will's wonderful parents Julia and Carl and Will's girlfriend Kelsey. Had a chance to visit with them. Both Carl and Julia are former college professors, so instead of a house full of GI Joes, Will grew up in Seattle surrounded by educational games. [*Laughter*] I'm told that even when Will was little, his mom was always a stickler for grammar, always making sure he said "to whom" instead of "to who." [*Laughter*] So I'm going to be very careful today. [*Laughter*]

I just had a chance to spend some time with them, and I have to say, Will is a pretty low-key guy. His idea of a good time isn't a big ceremony like this one. He'd rather be somewhere up in the mountains or on a trail, surrounded by cedar trees instead of cameras. But I think our Nation needs this ceremony today. Moments like this, Americans like Will, remind us of what our country can be at its best: a nation of citizens who look out for one another, who meet our obligations to one another, not just when it's easy, but also when it's hard. Maybe especially when it's hard.

Will, you're an example to everyone in this city and to our whole country of the professionalism and patriotism that we should strive for—whether we wear uniform or not—not just on particular occasions, but all the time.

For those who aren't familiar with the story of the battle that led Will to be here today, I want to take you back to that September morning 4 years ago. It's around sunrise. A column of Afghan soldiers and their American advisers are winding their way up a narrow trail towards a village to meet with elders. But just as the first soldier reaches the outskirts of the village, all hell breaks loose.

Almost instantly, four Americans—three marines, one Navy—at the front of the column are surrounded. Will and the soldiers in the center of the column are pinned down. Rocket-propelled grenades, mortar, machine gun fire—all of this is pouring in from three sides.

As he returns fire, Will calls for air support. But his initial requests are denied; Will and his team are too close to the village. And then Will learns that his noncommissioned officer, Sergeant First Class Kenneth Westbrook, has been shot in the neck. So Will breaks across 50 meters of open space, bullets biting all around. Lying on his back, he presses a bandage to Kenneth's wounds with one hand and calls for a medevac with the other, trying to keep his buddy calm.

By this time, the enemy has gotten even closer, just 20 or 30 meters away, and over the radio, they're demanding the Americans to surrender. So Will stops treating Kenneth long enough to respond by lobbing a grenade.

And finally, after more than an hour and a half of fighting, air support arrives. Will directs them to nearby targets. Then, it's time to move, so exposing himself again to enemy fire, Will helps carry Kenneth the length of more than two football fields, down steep terraces, to that helicopter. And then, in the moment

captured by those cameras, Will leans in to say goodbye.

But more Americans and more Afghans are still out there. So Will does something incredible. He jumps behind the wheel of an unarmored Ford Ranger pickup truck. A marine gets in the passenger seat. And they drive that truck—this is a vehicle designed for the highway—straight into the battle.

Twice they pick up injured Afghan soldiers, bullets whizzing past them, slamming into the pickup truck. Twice they bring them back. When the truck gives out, they grab a Humvee. The marine by Will's side has no idea how they survived. But, he says: "By that time it didn't matter. We weren't going to leave any soldiers behind."

Finally, a helicopter spots those four missing Americans, hours after they were trapped in the open ambush. So Will gets in another Humvee, with a crew that includes Dakota Meyer. And together, they drive. Past enemy fighters, up through the valley, exposed once more. And when they reach the village, Will jumps out, drawing even more fire, dodging even more bullets. But they reach those Americans, lying where they fell. Will and the others carry them out, one by one. They bring their fallen brothers home.

Scripture tells us, "The greatest among you shall be your servant." Captain Will Swenson was a leader on that September morning. But like all great leaders, he was also a servant: to the men he commanded, to the more than a dozen Afghans and Americans whose lives he saved, to the families of those who gave their last full measure of devotion on that faraway field. As one of his fellow soldiers later said, "Will did things that nobody else would ever do, and he did it for his guys and for everybody on the ground, to get them out."

And that's why, after I called Will to tell him he'd be receiving this medal, one of the first things he did was to invite to this ceremony those who fought alongside him. And I'd like all of those who served with such valor alongside Will, both Army and Marines, who fought for each other, please stand and be recognized. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Will also reached out to the families of the four Americans who gave their lives that day. To them he wrote, and I'm quoting Will now: "We have never met. We have never spoken. But I would like to believe that I know something about each of you through the actions of your loved ones on that day. They were part of a team. And you are now part of that team."

So I would ask the members of this team—the families of First Lieutenant Michael Johnson, Gunnery Sergeant Edwin Johnson, Gunnery Sergeant Aaron Kenefick, and Hospitalman Third Class James Layton, as well as the family of Kenneth Westbrook—to please stand.

Kenneth was the soldier Will delivered to the safety of that helicopter. And after being airlifted out, he made it to Walter Reed. He started rehab and spent time with his wife Charlene, who joins us here today. She still remembers the first time she spoke to Will, when he called from Afghanistan to check in on Kenneth.

Soon after that phone call, however, Kenneth took a turn for the worse. He succumbed to complications from his treatment. But I think it's fair to say that Charlene will always be grateful for the final days she was able to spend with her husband. And even now, a month rarely goes by when Will doesn't call or text, checking in with Charlene and her three boys. "That's the kind of man he is," Charlene says about Will. "You don't have to ask Will for help. He just knows when to be there for you."

So Will Swenson was there for his brothers. He was there for their families. As a nation, we thank God that patriots like him are there for us all.

So, Will, God bless you and all the men that you fought alongside and everything that you've done for us. God bless all our men and women in uniform. And God bless the United States of America.

With that, I'd like my Military Aide to read the citation, please.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Tiffany F. Hill, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citation. The President then presented the medal, assist-*

ed by Maj. Michael P. Wagner, USA, Army Aide to the President. Following the presentation, Maj. Gen. Donald L. Rutherford, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.]

Well, let me say once again, not only to Will, but all our men and women in uniform who have served us with such incredible courage and professionalism, that America is grateful for you. To the families of those we've lost, we will never forget.

And, Will, you are a remarkable role model for all of us, and we're very grateful for your service.

We are going to have a reception after this. I hear the food's pretty good around here. [*Laughter*] And so I hope all of you have a chance to stay, and those of you who have a chance to say thank you to Will, personally, obviously, that's very welcome.

I'm going to be exiting with Will and Michelle first. We'll take a couple of pictures. But enjoy yourselves this afternoon.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Julia Buchholz and Carl Swenson, parents, and Kelsey Long, girlfriend, of Capt. Swenson; 1st Lt. Ademola D. Fabayo, USMC, operations officer, Marine Embedded Training Team; Sgt. Kevin Duerst, USA, helicopter crew chief, California National Guard; and Charlene Westbrook, wife, and Zachary, Joshua, and Joseph, sons, of SFC Kenneth Westbrook, who died on October 7, 2009, from wounds sustained in Afghanistan on September 8, 2009. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citation and the prayer said by Maj. Gen. Rutherford.

Statement on the Observance of the Hajj and Eid al-Adha
October 15, 2013

Michelle and I extend our best wishes for a joyous Eid al-Adha to Muslims around the world and congratulate those performing the Hajj this year. As our Muslim neighbors and friends gather for Eid celebrations, Muslim Americans are among the more than 3 million pilgrims joining one of the world's largest and most diverse gatherings, which serves as a reminder of the shared roots of the world's Abrahamic faiths.

To commemorate Eid al-Adha, Muslims around the world are joining other faith communities in offering their assistance to those suffering from hunger, disease, and conflict. Their service is a powerful example of the positive role that faith can play in motivating communities to work together to address shared challenges.

On behalf of the American people, we extend our warmest greetings during this Hajj season. *Eid Mubarak* and *Hajj Mabrour.*

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in Colombia
October 16, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to

significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia declared in Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond October 21, 2013.

The circumstances that led to the declaration on October 21, 1995, of a national emergency have not been resolved. The actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and to cause an extreme level of violence, corruption, and harm in the United States and abroad. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12978 with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 16, 2013.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Senate Passage of Legislation To End the Federal Government Shutdown and Increase the Public Debt Limit and an Exchange With Reporters

October 16, 2013

The President. Good evening, everybody. Tonight the Republicans and Democrats in Congress have come together around an agreement that will reopen our Government and remove the threat of default from our economy.

The Senate has now voted to approve this agreement, and Democrats and Republicans in the House still have an important vote to take, but I want to thank the leaders of both parties for getting us to this point. Once this agreement arrives on my desk, I will sign it immediately. We'll begin reopening our Government immediately, and we can begin to lift this cloud of uncertainty and unease from our businesses and from the American people.

I'll have more to say about this tomorrow. And I've got some thoughts about how we can move forward in the remainder of the year and stay focused on the job at hand, because there's a lot of work ahead of us, including our need to earn back the trust of the American people that's been lost over the last few weeks. And we can begin to do that by addressing the real issues that they care about.

I've said it before; I'll say it again: I am willing to work with anybody, I am eager to work with anybody—Democrat or Republican, House or Senate Members—on any idea that will grow our economy, create new jobs, strengthen the middle class, and get our fiscal house in order for the long term. I've never believed that Democrats have a monopoly on good ideas. And despite the differences over the issue of shutting down our Government, I'm convinced that Democrats and Republicans can work together to make progress for America.

In fact, there are things that we know will help strengthen our economy that we could get done before this year is out. We still need to pass a law to fix our broken immigration system. We still need to pass a farm bill. And with the shutdown behind us and budget committees forming, we now have an opportunity to focus on a sensible budget that is responsible, that is fair, and that helps hard-working people all across this country.

And we could get all these things done even this year if everybody comes together in a spirit of how are we going to move this country forward and put the last 3 weeks behind us. That's what I believe the American people are looking for: not a focus on politics, not a focus on elections, but a focus on the concrete steps that can improve their lives. That's going to be

my focus. I'm looking forward to Congress doing the same.

But once again, I want to thank the leadership for coming together and getting this done. Hopefully, next time, it won't be in the eleventh hour. One of the things that I said throughout this process is, we've got to get out of the habit of governing by crisis. And my hope and expectation is, everybody has learned that there's no reason why we can't work on the issues at hand, why we can't disagree between the parties while still being agreeable and make sure that we're not inflicting harm on the American people when we do have disagreements.

So, hopefully, that's a lesson that will be internalized, and not just by me, but also by Democrats and Republicans; not only the leaders, but also the rank and file.

Thanks very much, everybody.

Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, isn't this going to happen all over again in a few months?

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2775.

Remarks on the End of the Federal Government Shutdown
October 17, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat.

Well, last night I signed legislation to reopen our Government and pay America's bills. Because Democrats and responsible Republicans came together, the first Government shutdown in 17 years is now over. The first default in more than 200 years will not happen. These twin threats to our economy have now been lifted. And I want to thank those Democrats and Republicans for getting together and ultimately getting this job done.

Now, there's been a lot of discussion lately of the politics of this shutdown. But let's be clear: There are no winners here. These last few weeks have inflicted completely unnecessary damage on our economy. We don't know yet the full scope of the damage, but every analyst out there believes it slowed our growth.

We know that families have gone without paychecks or services they depend on. We know that potential home buyers have gotten fewer mortgages and small-business loans have been put on hold. We know that consumers have cut back on spending and that half of all CEOs say that the shutdown and the threat of shutdown set back their plans to hire over the next 6 months. We know that just the threat of default, of America not paying all the bills that we owe on time, increased our borrowing costs, which adds to our deficit.

And of course, we know that the American people's frustration with what goes on in this town has never been higher. That's not a surprise that the American people are completely fed up with Washington. At a moment when our economic recovery demands more jobs, more momentum, we've got yet another self-inflicted crisis that set our economy back. And for what?

There was no economic rationale for all of this. Over the past 4 years, our economy has been growing, our businesses have been creating jobs, and our deficits have been cut in half. We hear some Members who pushed for the shutdown say they were doing it to save the American economy, but nothing has done more to undermine our economy these past 3 years than the kind of tactics that create these manufactured crises.

And you don't have to take my word for it. The agency that put America's credit rating on watch the other day explicitly cited all of this, saying that our economy "remains more dynamic and resilient" than other advanced economies and that the only thing putting us at risk is—and I'm quoting here—"repeated brinksmanship." That's what the credit rating agency

said. That wasn't a political statement, that was an analysis of what's hurting our economy by people whose job it is to analyze these things.

That also happens to be the view of our diplomats, who've been hearing from their counterparts internationally. Some of the same folks who pushed for the shutdown and threatened default claim their actions were needed to get America back on the right track, to make sure we're strong. But probably nothing has done more damage to America's credibility in the world, our standing with other countries, than the spectacle that we've seen these past several weeks. It's encouraged our enemies, it's emboldened our competitors, and it's depressed our friends, who look to us for steady leadership.

Now, the good news is, we'll bounce back from this. We always do. America is the bedrock of the global economy for a reason. We are the indispensable nation that the rest of the world looks to as the safest and most reliable place to invest, something that's made it easier for generations of Americans to invest in their own futures. We have earned that responsibility over more than two centuries because of the dynamism of our economy and our entrepreneurs, the productivity of our workers, but also because we keep our word and we meet our obligations. That's what full faith and credit means: You can count on us.

And today I want our people and our businesses and the rest of the world to know that the full faith and credit of the United States remains unquestioned.

But to all my friends in Congress, understand that how business is done in this town has to change. Because we've all got a lot of work to do on behalf of the American people, and that includes the hard work of regaining their trust. Our system of self-government doesn't function without it. And now that the Government is reopened and this threat to our economy is removed, all of us need to stop focusing on the lobbyists and the bloggers and the talking heads on radio and the professional activists, who profit from conflict, and focus on what the majority of Americans sent us here to do, and that's grow this economy, create good jobs, strengthen the middle class, educate our kids, lay the foundation for broad-based prosperity, and get our fiscal house in order for the long haul. That's why we're here. That should be our focus.

Now, that won't be easy. We all know that we have divided Government right now. There's a lot of noise out there, and the pressure from the extremes affect how a lot of Members of Congress see the day-to-day work that's supposed to be done here. And let's face it, the American people don't see every issue the same way. But that doesn't mean we can't make progress. And when we disagree, we don't have to suggest that the other side doesn't love this country or believe in free enterprise, or all the other rhetoric that seems to get worse every single year. If we disagree on something, we can move on and focus on the things we agree on and get some stuff done.

Let me be specific about three places where I believe we can make progress right now. First, in the coming days and weeks, we should sit down and pursue a balanced approach to a responsible budget, a budget that grows our economy faster and shrinks our long-term deficits further.

At the beginning of this year, that's what both Democrats and Republicans committed to doing. The Senate passed a budget; House passed a budget; they were supposed to come together and negotiate. And had one side not decided to pursue a strategy of brinksmanship, each side could have gotten together and figured out, how do we shape a budget that provides certainty to businesses and people who rely on Government, provides certainty to investors in our economy? And we'd be growing faster right now.

Now, the good news is, the legislation I signed yesterday now requires Congress to do exactly that, what it could have been doing all along. And we shouldn't approach this process of creating a budget as an ideological exercise, just cutting for the sake of cutting. The issue is not growth versus fiscal responsibility; we need both. We need a budget that deals with the issues that most Americans are focused on, creating more good jobs that pay better wages.

And remember, the deficit is getting smaller, not bigger. It's going down faster than it has in the last 50 years. The challenge we have right now are not short-term deficits, it's the long-term obligations that we have around things like Medicare and Social Security. And we want to make sure those are there for future generations.

So the key now is a budget that cuts out the things that we don't need, closes corporate tax loopholes that don't help create jobs, and frees up resources for the things that do help us grow, like education and infrastructure and research. And these things historically have not been partisan. And this shouldn't be as difficult as it's been in past years because we already spend less than we did a few years ago. Our deficits are half of what they were a few years ago. The debt problems we have now are long term, and we can address them without shortchanging our kids or shortchanging our grandkids or weakening the security that current generations have earned from their hard work. So that's number one.

Number two, we should finish fixing the job of our—let me say that again. Number two, we should finish the job of fixing a broken immigration system. There's already a broad coalition across America that's behind this effort of comprehensive immigration reform, from business leaders to faith leaders to law enforcement. In fact, the Senate has already passed a bill with strong bipartisan support that would make the biggest commitment to border security in our history; would modernize our legal immigration system; make sure everyone plays by the same rules; make sure that folks who came here illegally have to pay a fine, pay back taxes, meet their responsibilities. That bill has already passed the Senate. And economists estimate that if that bill becomes law, our economy would be 5-percent larger two decades from now. That's $1.4 trillion in new economic growth.

The majority of Americans think this is the right thing to do. And it's sitting there waiting for the House to pass it. Now, if the House has ideas on how to improve the Senate bill, let's hear them. Let's start the negotiations. But let's not leave this problem to keep festering for another year or 2 years or 3 years. This can and should get done by the end of this year.

Number three, we should pass a farm bill, one that American farmers and ranchers can depend on, one that protects vulnerable children and adults in times of need, one that gives rural communities opportunities to grow and the long-term certainty that they deserve.

Again, the Senate's already passed a solid bipartisan bill. It's got support from Democrats and Republicans. It's sitting in the House waiting for passage. If House Republicans have ideas that they think would improve the farm bill, let's see them. Let's negotiate. What are we waiting for? Let's get this done.

So passing a budget, immigration reform, farm bill—those are three specific things that would make a huge difference in our economy right now. And we could get them done by the end of the year if our focus is on what's good for the American people. And that's just the big stuff. There are all kinds of other things that we could be doing that don't get as much attention.

I understand we will not suddenly agree on everything now that the cloud of crisis has passed. Democrats and Republicans are far apart on a lot of issues. And I recognize there are folks on the other side who think that my policies are misguided—that's putting it mildly. That's okay. That's democracy. That's how it works. We can debate those differences vigorously, passionately, in good faith, through the normal democratic process.

And sometimes, we'll be just too far apart to forge an agreement. But that should not hold back our efforts in areas where we do agree. We shouldn't fail to act on areas that we do agree or could agree just because we don't think it's good politics, just because the extremes in our party don't like the word compromise.

I will look for willing partners wherever I can to get important work done. And there's no good reason why we can't govern responsibly, despite our differences, without lurching from manufactured crisis to manufactured crisis. In fact, one of the things that I hope all of us have

learned these past few weeks is that it turns out, smart, effective Government is important. It matters. I think the American people during this shutdown had a chance to get some idea of all the things, large and small, that Government does that make a difference in people's lives.

We hear all the time about how Government is the problem. Well, it turns out we rely on it in a whole lot of ways. Not only does it keep us strong through our military and our law enforcement, it plays a vital role in caring for our seniors and our veterans, educating our kids, making sure our workers are trained for the jobs that are being created, arming our businesses with the best science and technology so they can compete with companies from other countries. It plays a key role in keeping our food and our toys and our workplaces safe. It helps folks rebuild after a storm. It conserves our natural resources. It finances startups. It helps to sell our products overseas. It provides security to our diplomats abroad.

So let's work together to make Government work better, instead of treating it like an enemy or purposely making it work worse. That's not what the Founders of this Nation envisioned when they gave us the gift of self-government. You don't like a particular policy or a particular President? Then argue for your position, go out there and win an election, push to change it, but don't break it. Don't break what our predecessors spent over two centuries building. That's not being faithful to what this country is about.

And that brings me to one last point. I've got a simple message for all the dedicated and patriotic Federal workers who've either worked without pay or been forced off the job without pay these past few weeks, including most of my own staff: Thank you. Thanks for your service. Welcome back. What you do is important. It matters.

You defend our country overseas. You deliver benefits to our troops who've earned them when they come home. You guard our borders. You protect our civil rights. You help businesses grow and gain footholds in overseas markets. You protect the air we breathe and the water our children drink. And you push the boundaries of science and space, and you guide hundreds of thousands of people each day through the glories of this country. Thank you. What you do is important. And don't let anybody else tell you different. Especially the young people who come to this city to serve, believe that it matters: Well, you know what, you're right. It does.

And those of us who have the privilege to serve this country have an obligation to do our job as best we can. And we come from different parties, but we are Americans first. And that's why disagreement cannot mean dysfunction. It can't degenerate into hatred. The American people's hopes and dreams are what matters, not ours. Our obligations are to them. Our regard for them compels us all, Democrats and Republicans, to cooperate and compromise and act in the best interests of our Nation—one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. H.R. 2775, approved October 17, was assigned Public Law No. 113–46.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy
October 17, 2013

The President. Well, it's wonderful to welcome Prime Minister Letta to the Oval Office. We have had a chance to get to know each other over the last several international summits that we've attended, and I couldn't be more impressed with the Prime Minister's integrity and thoughtfulness and leadership.

I want to congratulate him on having won a vote of confidence and passing a budget. I think it's clear that Italy is moving in the right direction in stabilizing its finances and embark-

ing on reforms that will make it more competitive. And we spent a lot of our time discussing the importance of European growth, that with high unemployment—particularly youth unemployment—and the challenges that have been created since 2008, as well as the challenges within the euro zone, I think it's important for all of us to coordinate. And the United States obviously is not part of Europe, but we have a great interest in Europe because if Europe is doing well, that means that we're doing well also.

So we discussed how we could partner on a strong growth agenda. Part of that growth agenda is the Transatlantic Partnership agreement [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership],* the trade agreement that we're trying to shape between the European Union and the United States. We've had several meetings already on that, and I know Prime Minister Letta is a strong proponent of expanding what is already a very important trade relationship between the United States and Europe. So given the fact that he will be ascending to the Presidency of the European Commission, it's a great opportunity for his leadership to assert itself during those negotiations.

We also talked about our security cooperation, and Italy has been an outstanding partner. A NATO ally on issues ranging from Libya to Syria, to counterterrorism efforts, consistently, Italy has been a strong partner, and obviously, it's been an outstanding host to our men and women who serve in the region. And so we very much thank the Italian people as well as the Prime Minister for their strong support there.

On Libya, we agreed that we want to continue to work with other international partners to strengthen the security capacity of the Libyan Government. There's enormous potential and hope for the Libyan people, but what they need now is a Government that is representative and inclusive and can provide the basic security, as well as the basic services, that will help the Libyan people achieve that potential. And I think that we both share an interest in finding ways in which we can help the Libyans move forward.

With respect to Syria, we have been pleased to see not only the U.N. resolution, but also now the concrete efforts to get chemical weapons out of Syria. And Italy has been very supportive of that effort. And we both believe that it's important to build off that success—or at least that good start—to also talk about the humanitarian suffering that the Syrian people are experiencing. Italy has been a contributor to the humanitarian efforts there, and we want to partner with them to find ways to not only relieve the suffering, but also to implement a political transition that can allow people to return to their homes and end the killing that's been taking place there.

And we had a chance to talk about Afghanistan. Italian troops have been extraordinary in their sacrifice and their efforts in helping to create an Afghanistan that is secure and safe for the Afghan people. We very much appreciate it. We talked about how well our militaries coordinate with each other and the genuine partnership that has been created. And we both reaffirmed our commitment to make sure that when we end combat activities in Afghanistan at the end of 2014, that we are in a position to leave behind an Afghanistan that has a strong professional security service and a government that is meeting its obligations to all its people, including all ethnic groups and women and others who have started to see greater opportunities and greater freedoms over the past several years.

And again, I want to say to the Italian people, and to Prime Minister Letta, in particular, we're grateful for your friendship. I think everybody understands the closeness between Italy and the United States is not just because of a friendship between leaders, but also because of the incredible history and the people-to-people relations between our two countries. Italian Americans in this country have helped to make America what it is and in every aspect of life, and that bond is one that will never go

* White House correction.

away and, hopefully, will continue to be strengthened during the time that you and I have the chance to work together. I'm sure it will be.

The last point I want to make is that the Prime Minister is from Tuscany, from Pisa, and he has extended an invitation to me to come and visit and eat some very good food. [*Laughter*] I don't know whether I'm going to be able to take as much time as I want while I'm still President, but Michelle and I, having been to Tuscany before I was President and seeing how spectacular and wonderful it is, I told the Prime Minister that he will not have to twist my arm to try to get me to come to Tuscany again sometime in the near future.

So thank you very much for the wonderful visit. Thank you.

Prime Minister Letta. Thank you very much. Of course, the invitation to Tuscany is for now, for the future, for whenever you want: Florence, Pisa, Sienna, or Lucca.

First of all, I congratulated President Obama, for yesterday's success is his success, but it is also our success, because yesterday's decision was very important for the stability in the markets in the world, in Europe and in Italy, first of all. We need stability because we have such a big debt, so we need to have low interest rates.

Yesterday we had the lowest interest rates in Italy since 2 years and half. That was for us a very important achievement, demonstration of the fact that we are in the right path. And we have to continue that, and to continue on this path, we need to have an alliance, alliance of growth, first of all.

Next year, Italy will be President of the European Council. For—in the second semester, we will start the new European legislature. The present European legislature is linked to the word austerity. Austerity without growth, it's a big problem for us. This is why we passed, in Italy, a budget with the budget under control, with the debt decreasing, the deficit decreasing, public spending decreasing, and the level of taxes on families and entrepreneurs decreasing for the first time since many years.

So it's very important to continue on having budget under control, but we need to push growth. This is why the European legislature that will start with the Italian Presidency of the European Council will be a legislature based, first of all, on growth. And of course, T–TIP is one of the most important achievement. My dream will be to sign this agreement, both, together, before the end of next year, before the end of the Italian Presidency next year.

It is important we have to fight against protectionism. In—both in the G–8 and the G–20 meeting, we have very important common positions in fighting against the fiscal evasion, fiscal avoidance, fiscal havens, against protectionism, and T–TIP is so important.

For the Mediterranean concern, I tried to present to President Obama all our concerns about the situation, the migration problems, of course the mission—the humanitarian military mission—that Italy raised in these very days, "Mare Nostrum," because we don't want to have Mediterranean as a dead sea. Mediterranean has to be a sea of life.

And of course, we have a problem of failed states in Africa. We have to help them, and first of all, Libya, of course. We have to work together on Syria to apply the resolution as soon as possible. And we want to have Geneva II as soon as possible too. And of course, there, our work will be all together. And also I will thank President Obama's words on Afghanistan, of course. Our joint commitment is very important for the stabilization of the area.

So I am very glad for the words I listened, but I'm very glad for the yesterday's result. It's very important for our future. Our future will be a future of friendship, of cooperation, and next legislature, next European legislature will be—has to be—a legislature of growth. And we, the Italians, we will work very hard in reaching this goal because growth and, first of all, jobs for youth is my mission, our mission, and we will work together on that.

President Obama. All right. Thank you again. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Regarding Designation of Funds for Overseas Contingency Operations and Global Counterterrorism
October 17, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 114(c) of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014 (CR), I hereby designate for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism all funding (including the rescission of funds) so designated by the Congress in section 114(a) of the CR pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, as outlined in the enclosed list of accounts.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed memorandum from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Certifying the Public Debt Limit Increase
October 17, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to section 1002(b) of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014, I hereby certify that absent a suspension of the limit under section 3101(b) of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary of the Treasury would be unable to issue debt to meet existing commitments.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks on the Nomination of Jeh C. Johnson To Be Secretary of Homeland Security
October 18, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. As President, my most solemn responsibility is the safety and security of the American people. And we've got an outstanding team here of folks who work every single day to make sure that we're doing everything we can to fulfill that responsibility. And that means that our entire Government—our law enforcement and homeland security professionals, our troops, our diplomats, our intelligence personnel—are all working together. It means working with State and local partners to disrupt terrorist attacks, to make our borders more secure, respond to natural disasters, and make our immigration system more effective and fair.

Now, addressing any one of these challenges is a tall order. Addressing all of them at once is a monumental task. But that's what the dedicated men and women of the Department of Homeland Security do every day. And today I'm proud to announce my choice to lead them, an outstanding public servant who I've known and trusted for years, Mr. Jeh Johnson.

Now, we are, of course, enormously grateful to Secretary Janet Napolitano. Janet couldn't be here today; she's already made her move to her new position in sunny California,

overseeing the higher education system in that great State. And I know that she's going to do an outstanding job there with the incredible young people that are in our largest State. But we all deeply appreciate the terrific job that she did over the last 4½ years. I want to thank Rand Beers for his service and for stepping in as Acting Secretary after Janet left.

Thanks in no small part to Janet's leadership, her team, we've done more to protect our homeland against those who wish to do us harm. We've strengthened our borders. We've taken steps to make sure our immigration system better reflects our values. We've helped thousands of Americans recover from hurricanes and tornados, floods and wildfires. And we've worked to clean up a massive oil spill in the Gulf as well as address a flu pandemic.

In Jeh Johnson, we have the right person to continue this important work. From the moment I took office, Jeh was an absolutely critical member of my national security team, and he demonstrated again and again the qualities that will make him a strong Secretary of Homeland Security.

Jeh has a deep understanding of the threats and challenges facing the United States. As Pentagon's—as the Pentagon's top lawyer, he helped design and implement many of the policies that have kept our country safe, including our success in dismantling the core of Al Qaida in the FATA.

When I directed my national security team to be more open and transparent about how our policies work and how we make decisions, especially when it comes to preventing terrorist attacks, Jeh was one of the leaders who spoke eloquently about how we meet today's threats in a way that are consistent with our values, including the rule of law.

Jeh also knows that meeting these threats demands cooperation and coordination across our Government. He's been there in the Situation Room at the table in moments of decision, working with leaders from a host of agencies to make sure everyone is rowing in the same direction. And he's respected across our Government as a team player, somebody who knows how to get folks who don't always agree to work towards a common goal.

Jeh has experience leading large, complex organizations. As a member of the Pentagon's senior management team, first under Bob Gates and then under Leon Panetta, he helped oversee the work of more than 3 million military and civilian personnel across the country and around the world. And I think it's fair to say that both former Secretaries Gates and Panetta will attest to the incredible professionalism that Jeh brings to the job and the bipartisan approach that, appropriately, he takes when it comes to national security.

He's also earned a reputation as a cool and calm leader. Jeh appreciates that any organization's greatest asset is its people, and at the Pentagon, he guided the report explaining why allowing our men and women in uniform to serve their country openly would not weaken our military. Congress ended up using that report that Jeh helped to craft to justify repealing "don't ask, don't tell." And America and our military are stronger because we did, in part because of Jeh's determined leadership. I know he will bring that same commitment to our hard-working folks at DHS.

And finally, Jeh believes, in a deep and personal way, that keeping America safe requires us also upholding the values and civil liberties that make America great. Jeh tells the story of his uncle who was a member of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. And he and his fellow airmen served with honor, even when their country didn't treat them with the dignity and the respect that they deserved. And it was a lesson that Jeh never forgot. "We must adopt legal positions that comport with common sense," Jeh says, "consistent with who we are as Americans." Jeh is a pretty good lawyer, so he knows what that means.

And Jeh understands that this country is worth protecting, not because of what we build or what we own, but because of who we are. And that's what sets us apart. That's why, as a nation, we have to keep adapting to changing threats, whether natural or manmade. We have to stay ready when disaster strikes and help Americans recover in the aftermath. We've got

to fix our broken immigration system in a way that strengthens our borders and modernizes legal immigration and makes sure everybody is playing by the same rules.

And I'm confident that I could not make a better choice in Jeh, somebody who I'm confident is going to be moving not just the agency forward, but helping to move the country forward.

So, Jeh, thank you so much for agreeing to take on this very difficult and extraordinary mission. You've got a great team over at DHS, and I know that they're looking forward to having you over there. I urge the Senate to confirm Jeh as soon as possible. And I thank you, as well as your family, to agreeing to serve. Your wife Susan and your daughter Natalie and—couldn't be here because they're visiting Jeh, Jr., out at Occidental College, which, by the way, I went to for 2 years when I was young. It's a fine college. I'm sorry I couldn't be there to say hi to him. But your son chose well.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to invite Jeh Johnson to say a few words, hopefully, our next Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary-designate Johnson. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

As you noted, my wife and two kids are not here because it's parents' weekend at Occidental, and thanks to the cost of a nonrefundable airline ticket—[*laughter*]—they could not be in two places at once. They wish they could be here.

Thank you for the tremendous honor of this nomination and the trust you have placed in me to carry out this large and important responsibility as Secretary of Homeland Security. I was not looking for this opportunity. I had left Government at the end of last year and was settling back into private life and private law practice. But when I received the call, I could not refuse it.

I am a New Yorker, and I was present in Manhattan on 9/11, which happens to be my birthday, when that bright and beautiful day was—a day something like this—was shattered by the largest terrorist attack on our homeland in history. I wandered the streets of New York that day and wondered and asked, what can I do? Since then, I have tried to devote myself to answering that question. I love this country. I care about the safety of our people. I believe in public service. And I remain loyal to you, Mr. President.

If confirmed by the Senate, I promise all of my energy, focus, and ability toward the task of safeguarding our Nation's national and homeland security.

Thank you again, sir.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Susan M. DiMarco, wife of Secretary-designate Johnson, and their children Natalie Johnson and Jeh Johnson, Jr. He also referred to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.

Statement on the Death of Former Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas S. Foley

October 18, 2013

Today America has lost a legend of the United States Congress. For 30 years, Tom Foley represented the people of Washington's Fifth District with skill, dedication, and a deep commitment to improving the lives of those he was elected to serve. Tom's straightforward approach helped him find common ground with members of both parties, eventually leading to his election as the 57th Speaker of the House. After his career in Congress, Tom served as the U.S. Ambassador to Japan, where his poise and civility helped strengthen our relationship with one of our closest allies. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to Tom's wife Heather and the entire Foley family.

Statement on the Death of Representative C. William Young
October 18, 2013

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Congressman C.W. "Bill" Young. For over 50 years Bill served the people of Florida, both in the State legislature and as the longest serving Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives. He will be remembered for his advocacy and support for the Armed Forces, servicemembers, and their families as well as his statesmanship and long history of working across the aisle to keep our country moving forward.

The President's Weekly Address
October 19, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, because Democrats and responsible Republicans came together, the Government was reopened, and the threat of default was removed from our economy.

There's been a lot of discussion lately of the politics of this shutdown. But the truth is, there were no winners in this. At a time when our economy needs more growth and more jobs, the manufactured crisis of these last few weeks actually harmed jobs and growth. And it's understandable that your frustration with what goes on in Washington has never been higher.

The way business is done in Washington has to change. Now that these clouds of crisis and uncertainty have lifted, we need to focus on what the majority of Americans sent us here to do: grow the economy, create good jobs, strengthen the middle class, lay the foundation for broad-based prosperity, and get our fiscal house in order for the long haul.

It won't be easy. But we can make progress. Specifically, there are three places where I believe that Democrats and Republicans can work together right away.

First, we should sit down and pursue a balanced approach to a responsible budget, one that grows our economy faster and shrinks our long-term deficits further. There's no choice between growth and fiscal responsibility; we need both. So we're making a serious mistake if a budget doesn't focus on what you're focused on: creating more good jobs that pay better wages. If we're going to free up resources for the things that help us grow—education, infrastructure, research—we should cut what we don't need and close corporate tax loopholes that don't help create jobs. This shouldn't be as difficult as it's been in past years. Remember, our deficits are shrinking, not growing.

Second, we should finish the job of fixing our broken immigration system. There's already a broad coalition across America that's behind this effort, from business leaders to faith leaders, to law enforcement. It would grow our economy. It would secure our borders. The Senate has already passed a bill with strong bipartisan support. Now the House should too. The majority of Americans thinks this is the right thing to do. It can and should get done by the end of this year.

Third, we should pass a farm bill, one that America's farmers and ranchers can depend on, one that protects vulnerable children and adults in times of need, and one that gives rural communities opportunities to grow and the longer term certainty they deserve.

We won't suddenly agree on everything now that the cloud of crisis has passed. But we shouldn't hold back on places where we do agree just because we don't think it's good politics or just because the extremes in our parties don't like compromise. I'll look for willing partners from either party to get important work done. There's no good reason why we can't govern responsibly, without lurching from manufactured crisis to manufactured crisis. Because that isn't governing, it's just hurting the people we were sent here to serve.

Those of us who have the privilege to serve this country have an obligation to do our job the best we can. We come from different parties, but we're Americans first. And our obligations to you must compel all of us, Democrats and Republicans, to cooperate and compromise and act in the best interests of this country that we love.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:45 p.m. on October 18 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on October 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 19.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
October 21, 2013

The President. Everybody, have a seat.

[*At this point, Shelbyville, DE, resident Janice Baker, a beneficiary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Baker. Thank you all. And I am now honored to introduce the President of the United States.

The President. Great job.

Ms. Baker. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Well, thank you, Janice. And thanks to everybody here for coming on this beautiful day. Welcome to the White House.

About 3 weeks ago, as the Federal Government shut down, the Affordable Care Act's health insurance marketplaces opened for business across the country. Well, we've now gotten the Government back open for the American people, and today I want to talk about how we're going to get the marketplaces running at full steam as well. And I'm joined today by folks who have either benefited from the Affordable Care Act already or who are helping their fellow citizens learn about what this law means for them and how they can get covered.

Of course, you've probably heard that healthcare.gov—the new website where people can apply for health insurance and browse and buy affordable plans in most States—hasn't worked as smoothly as it was supposed to work. And the number of people who have visited the site has been overwhelming, which has aggravated some of these underlying problems.

Despite all that, thousands of people are signing up and saving money as we speak. Many Americans with a preexisting condition, like Janice, are discovering that they can finally get health insurance like everybody else.

So today I want to speak to every American who's looking to get affordable health insurance. I want you to know what's available to you and why it may be a good deal for you. And for those who've had some problems with the website, I want to tell you what we're doing to make it work better and how you can sign up to get covered in other ways.

But before I do that, let me remind everybody that the Affordable Care Act is not just a website. It's much more. For the vast majority of Americans—for 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance through your employer or Medicare or Medicaid—you don't need to sign up for coverage through a website at all. You've already got coverage. What the Affordable Care Act does for you is to provide you with new benefits and protections that have been in place for some time. You may not know it, but you're already benefiting from these provisions in the law.

For example, because of the Affordable Care Act, young people like Jasmine Jennings and Jessica Ugalde and Ezra Salop—all of whom are here today—they've been able to stay on their parents' plans until they're 26. Millions of other young people are currently benefiting from that part of the law. Another part of the Affordable Care Act is providing seniors with deeper discounts on their

prescription medicine. Billions of dollars have been saved by seniors already. That's part of the law. It's already in place. It's happening right now.

Already, because of the Affordable Care Act, preventive care like mammograms and birth control are free through your employers. That's part of this law. So there are a wide range of consumer protections and benefits that you already have if you've got health insurance. You may not have noticed them, but you've got them, and they're not going anywhere. And they're not dependent on a website.

Here's another thing that the Affordable Care Act does. In States where Governors and legislatures have wisely allowed it, the Affordable Care Act provides the opportunity for many Americans to get covered under Medicaid for the first time. So, in Oregon, for example, that's helped cut the number of uninsured people by 10 percent just in the last 3 weeks. Think about that. That's 56,000 more Americans who now have health care. That doesn't depend on a website.

Now, if you're one of the 15 percent of Americans who don't have health insurance—either because you can't afford it or because your employer doesn't offer it or because you're a small-businessperson and you have to go out on the individual market and buy it on your own and it's just too expensive—October 1 was an important date. That's when we opened the new marketplaces where people without health insurance or who can't afford health insurance or who aren't part of a group plan can finally start getting affordable coverage.

And the idea is simple. By enrolling in what we're calling these marketplaces, you become part of a big group plan, as if you were working for a big employer: a statewide group plan that spreads risk between sick people and healthy people, between young and old, and then bargains on your behalf for the best deal on health care. What we've done is essentially created competition where there wasn't competition before. We created these big group plans, and now insurers are really interested in getting your business. And so insurers have created new health care plans with more choices to be made available through these marketplaces.

And as a result of this choice and this competition, prices have come down. When you add the new tax credits that many people are eligible for through the law, then the prices come down even further. So one study shows that through new options created by the Affordable Care Act, nearly 6 in 10 uninsured Americans will find that they can get covered for less than a hundred dollars a month. Think about that. Through the marketplaces, you can get health insurance for what may be the equivalent of your cell phone bill or your cable bill, and that's a good deal.

So the fact is, the product of the Affordable Care Act for people without health insurance is quality health insurance that's affordable. And that product is working. It's really good. And it turns out, there's a massive demand for it. So far, the national website, healthcare.gov, has been visited nearly 20 million times. [*Applause*] Twenty million times. And there's great demand at the State level as well, because a lot—there are a bunch of States that are running their own marketplaces.

We know that nearly one-third of the people applying in Connecticut and Maryland, for example, are under 35 years old. They understand that they can get a good deal at low costs, have the security of health care, and this is not just for old folks like me, that everybody needs good quality health insurance. And all told, more than half a million consumers across the country have successfully submitted applications through Federal and State marketplaces. And many of those applications aren't just for individuals, it's for their entire families. So even more people are already looking to potentially take advantage of the high quality, affordable insurance that is provided through the Affordable Care Act.

So let me just recap here. The product is good. The health insurance that's being provided is good. It's high quality, and it's affordable. People can save money, significant money, by getting insurance that's being provided through these marketplaces. And we know that

the demand is there. People are rushing to see what's available. And those who've already had a chance to enroll are thrilled with the result. Every day, people who were stuck with sky-high premiums because of preexisting conditions are getting affordable insurance for the first time or finding, like Janice did, that they're saving a lot of money. Every day, women are finally buying coverage that doesn't charge them higher premiums than men for the same care. Every day, people are discovering that new health insurance plans have to cover maternity care, mental health care, free preventive care.

So you just heard Janice's story. She owns her own small business. She recently became the first woman to enroll in coverage through Delaware's exchange. And it's true, it took her a few tries, but it was worth it after being turned down for insurance three times due to minor preexisting conditions. So now she'll be covered, she'll save 150 bucks a month, and she won't have to worry that one illness or accident will cost her her business that she's worked so hard to build.

And Janice is not alone. I recently received a letter from a woman named Jessica Sanford in Washington State. And here's what she wrote: "I am a single mom, no child support, self-employed, and I haven't had insurance for 15 years because it's too expensive. My son has ADHD and requires regular doctor visits, and his meds alone cost $250 per month. I have had an ongoing tendinitis problem due to my line of work that I haven't had treated. Now, finally, we get to have coverage because of the ACA for $169 per month. I was crying the other day when I signed up. So much stress lifted."

Now, that is not untypical for a lot of folks like Jessica who have been struggling without health insurance. That's what the Affordable Care Act is all about. The point is, the essence of the law—the health insurance that's available to people—is working just fine. In some cases, actually, it's exceeding expectations: The prices are lower than we expected, the choice is greater than we expected.

But the problem has been that the website that's supposed to make it easy to apply for and purchase the insurance is not working the way it should for everybody. And there's no sugarcoating it. The website has been too slow, people have been getting stuck during the application process. And I think it's fair to say that nobody is more frustrated by that than I am. Because—precisely because the product is good, I want the cash registers to work. I want the checkout lines to be smooth. So I want people to be able to get this great product. And there's no excuse for the problems, and it's—these problems are getting fixed.

But while we're working out the kinks in the system, I want everybody to understand the nature of the problem. First of all, even with all the problems at healthcare.gov, the website is still working for a lot of people, just not as quick or efficient or consistent as we want. And although many of these folks have found that they had to wait longer than they wanted, once they complete the process, they're very happy with the deal that's available to them, just like Janice is.

Second, I want everybody to remember that we're only 3 weeks into a 6-month open enrollment period, when you can buy these new plans. Keep in mind, the insurance doesn't start until January 1; that's the earliest that the insurance can kick in. No one who decides to purchase a plan has to pay their first premium until December 15. And unlike the day after Thanksgiving sales for the latest PlayStation or flat-screen TVs, the insurance plans don't run out. They're not going to sell out. They'll be available through the marketplace throughout the open enrollment period. The prices that insurers have set will not change. So everybody who wants insurance through the marketplace will get insurance, period. [*Applause*] Everybody who wants insurance through the marketplace will get insurance.

Third, we are doing everything we can possibly do to get the websites working better, faster, sooner. We've got people working overtime, 24/7, to boost capacity and address the problems. Experts from some of America's top private sector tech companies who, by the way, have seen things like this happen before, they want it to work. They're reaching out. They're

offering to send help. We've had some of the best IT talent in the entire country join the team. And we're well into a tech surge to fix the problem. And we are confident that we will get all the problems fixed.

Number four, while the website will ultimately be the easiest way to buy insurance through the marketplace, it isn't the only way. And I want to emphasize this. Even as we redouble our efforts to get the site working as well as it's supposed to, we're also redoubling our efforts to make sure you can still buy the same quality, affordable insurance plans available on the marketplace the old-fashioned way: offline, either over the phone or in person.

And by the way, there are a lot of people who want to take advantage of this who are more comfortable working on the phone anyway or in person. So let me go through the specifics as to how you can do that if you're having problems with the website or you just prefer dealing with a person.

Yesterday we updated the website's home page to offer more information about the other avenues to enroll in affordable health care until the online option works for everybody. So you'll find information about how to talk to a specialist who can help you apply over the phone or to receive a downloadable application you can fill out yourself and mail in.

We've also added more staff to the call centers where you can apply for insurance over the phone. Those are already—they've been working. But a lot of people have decided first to go to the website. But keep in mind, these call centers are already up and running. And you can get your questions answered by real people, 24 hours a day, in 150 different languages. The phone number for these call centers is 1–800–318–2596. I want to repeat that: 1–800–318–2596. Wait times have averaged less than 1 minute so far on the call centers, although I admit that the wait times probably might go up a little bit now that I've read the number out loud on national television. [*Laughter*]

But the point is, the call centers are available. You can talk to somebody directly, and they can walk you through the application process. And I guarantee you, if one thing is worth the wait, it's the safety and security of health care that you can afford or the amount of money that you can save by buying health insurance through the marketplaces.

Once you get on the phone with a trained representative, it usually takes about 25 minutes for an individual to apply for coverage, about 45 minutes for a family. Once you apply for coverage, you will be contacted by mail—by e-mail or postal mail about your coverage status.

But you don't have to just go through the phone. You can also apply in person with the help of local navigators. These are people specially trained to help you sign up for health care, and they exist all across the country. Or you can go to community health centers and hospitals. Just visit localhelp.healthcare.gov to find out where in your area you can get help and apply for insurance in person.

And finally, if you've already tried to apply through the website and you've been stuck somewhere along the way, do not worry. In the coming weeks, we will contact you directly, personally, with a concrete recommendation for how you can complete your application, shop for coverage, pick a plan that meets your needs, and get covered once and for all.

So here's the bottom line. The product, the health insurance, is good. The prices are good. It is a good deal. People don't just want it, they're showing up to buy it. Nobody is madder than me about the fact that the website isn't working as well as it should, which means it's going to get fixed. [*Laughter*]

And in the meantime, you can bypass the website and apply by phone or in person. So don't let problems with the website deter you from signing up or signing your family up or showing your friends how to sign up, because it is worth it. It will save you money. If you don't have health insurance, if you've got a preexisting condition, it will save you money, and it will give you the security that your family needs.

In fact, even with the website issues, we've actually made the overall process of buying insurance through the marketplace a lot smoother and easier than the old way of buying insurance on your own. Part of the challenge here is

that a lot of people may not remember what it's like to buy insurance the traditional way.

The way we've set it up, there are no more absurdly long application forms. There's no medical history questionnaire that goes on for pages and pages. There's no more getting denied because you've had a preexisting condition. Instead of contacting a bunch of different insurers once—one at a time, which is what Janice and a lot of people who are shopping on the individual market for health insurance had to do, there's one single place you can go shop and compare plans that have to compete for your business. There's one single phone number you can call for help. And once the kinks in the website have been ironed out, it will be even smoother and even easier. But in the meantime, we will help you sign up, because consumers want to buy this product and insurance companies want to sell it to you.

Now, let me close by addressing some of the politics that have swirled around the Affordable Care Act. I recognize that the Republican Party has made blocking the Affordable Care Act its signature policy idea. Sometimes, it seems to be the one thing that unifies the party these days. [*Laughter*] In fact, they were willing to shut down the Government and potentially harm the global economy to try to get it repealed. And I'm sure that given the problems with the website so far, they're going to be looking to go after it even harder. And let's admit it, with the website not working as well as it needs to work, that makes a lot of supporters nervous because they know how it's been subject to so much attack, the Affordable Care Act generally.

But I just want to remind everybody, we did not wage this long and contentious battle just around a website. That's not what this was about. We waged this battle to make sure that millions of Americans in the wealthiest nation on Earth finally have the same chance to get the same security of affordable quality health care as anybody else. That's what this is about. And the Affordable Care Act has done that.

People can now get good insurance. People with preexisting conditions can now afford insurance. And if the launch of this website proves anything, it's that people across the country don't just need that security, they want that security. They want it. And in the meantime—I've said many times—I am willing to work with anyone on any idea to make this law perform even better. But it's time for folks to stop rooting for its failure, because hard-working, middle class families are rooting for its success. And if the product is good, they're willing to be patient.

Now, I got a letter last week from a self-employed man named John Mier in Leetsdale, Pennsylvania. He used the new marketplace to get himself and his wife covered and save a lot of money. And here's what he said, because it pretty much sums up my message today: "Yes, the website really stank for the first week." [*Laughter*] "But instead of paying $1,600 per month for a group insurance plan, we have a plan that will only cost us $692 a month, a savings of $900 per month." John said that while he saw—when he saw what they'd be paying, he turned to his wife and told her: "We might just pull through. We can afford this." And John eventually predicted that "the website will work like a champ."

So John's—he was frustrated by the website, but he's feeling a little less frustrated once he found out that he was saving 900 bucks a month on his health insurance. And John is right, the website is going to get fixed and the law works. That's why we fought so hard to pass this law: to save folks like John money; to give people who don't have health insurance the chance to get it for the first time; to lift from the American people the crushing burden of unaffordable health care; to free families from the pervasive fear that one illness——

[*A participant standing behind the President began to faint.*]

The President. There you go, you're okay. I'm right here. I've got you. [*Laughter*] No, no, you're okay. This happens when I talk too long. [*Laughter*] You'll be okay. Here, why don't you go. You got her?

[*The participant was escorted into the White House.*]

The President. Good catch, by the way, whoever was here. [*Laughter*]

But that's always our goal, to free families from the pervasive fear that one illness or one injury might cost you everything that you dedicated a lifetime to build. Our goal has always been to declare that in this country the security of health care is not a privilege for a fortunate few, it's a right for all to enjoy. That's what the Affordable Care Act is all about. That's its promise. And I intend to deliver on that promise.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Ms. Baker.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan

October 23, 2013

President Obama. It's a great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Sharif to the Oval Office. He was reminding me that the last time he visited here was quite some time ago, and we're glad to have him back after a historic election that took place in Pakistan.

To see a peaceful transition from one democratically elected Government to another was an enormous milestone for Pakistan and a testimony to the Pakistani people's desire for democracy. And so we are very glad to be able to partner with the people of Pakistan and the Pakistani Government on a whole range of issues that are of common interest and common concern to us.

We had an excellent conversation on a wide range of issues. And at the outset, I emphasized that the United States considers Pakistan to be a very important strategic partner. We believe that if Pakistan is secure and peaceful and prosperous, that's not only good for Pakistan, it's good for the region, and it's good for the world. And we want to do everything that we can to help the Prime Minister as he moves forward on a bold agenda to achieve that vision.

We spent a lot of time talking about the economy. I know that the Prime Minister is very deeply concerned about making sure that the energy sector inside of Pakistan is functioning efficiently and that industry and jobs and greater opportunity exist for all of the people of Pakistan and all regions of Pakistan. And we discussed how the United States could potentially be helpful on energy projects, on infrastructure projects.

I applauded the Prime Minister for some of the reform steps that he's already taken. Not all of them are easy, but they promise to put Pakistan's finances and economy on a more stable footing. And the Prime Minister emphasized how trade can be a powerful engine for growth as well. And we're going to be exploring ways that we can continue to deepen trade between our two countries.

We talked about security and the concerns that both of us have about senseless violence, terrorism, and extremism. And we agreed that we need to continue to find constructive ways to partner together, ways that respect Pakistan's sovereignty, that respect the concerns of both countries.

And I'm optimistic that we can continue to make important strides in moving forward because both the Pakistani people and the American people have suffered terribly from terrorism in the past. More Pakistani civilians have been killed, obviously, from some of these terrorist attacks than anybody, and so I know that the Prime Minister is very much committed to trying to reduce these incidents of terrorism inside of Pakistan's borders and the degree to which these activities may be exported to other countries.

It's a challenge. It's not easy, and we are committed to working together and making

sure that rather than this being a source of tension between our two countries, that it can be a source of strength for us, working together in a constructive and a respectful way.

We had an opportunity to discuss Afghanistan. Obviously, Pakistan is deeply interested in how Afghanistan transitions as the United States and other coalition forces end their combat role next year and Afghanistan is fully responsible for its own security. And I pledged to fully brief the Prime Minister and his government as we make progress in not only Afghan elections, but also a long-term strategy for stability in the region.

And the Prime Minister and I both agreed that it is in America and Pakistan's interests for Afghanistan to be stable and secure, its sovereignty respected. The Prime Minister has had very good meetings with President Karzai, and I know that President Karzai very much appreciated many of the gestures that Prime Minister Sharif has made. And I'm confident that, working together, we can achieve a goal that is good for Afghanistan, but also helps to protect Pakistan over the long term.

And we had an opportunity to discuss India, and the Prime Minister had the opportunity to meet with Indian Prime Minister Singh in New York. I think he is taking a very wise path in exploring how decades of tension between India and Pakistan can be reduced, because, as he points out, billions of dollars have been spent on an arms race in response to these tensions. And those resources could be much more profitably invested in education and social welfare programs on both sides of the border between India and Pakistan and would be good for the entire subcontinent and good for the world.

And so I very much appreciate all of the work that Prime Minister Sharif has already done. He has great challenges ahead of him, but he is somebody who, I think, understands where Pakistan needs to go. And we want to be fully supportive of continued success and continued democracy inside of Pakistan.

And I shared with him that I had the opportunity, back in 1980, when I was a very young man, to visit Pakistan, because I had two Pakistani roommates in college and whose mothers taught me how to cook *dal* and *keema* and other very good Pakistani food. And it was a wonderful trip for me and created a great appreciation and a great love for the Pakistani people.

I know that Pakistani Americans here in the United States are enormous contributors to the growth and development of the United States, and so we have these strong people-to-people connections. And my hope is, is that—despite what inevitably will be some tensions between our two countries and occasional misunderstandings between our two countries—that the fundamental good will that is shared between the Pakistani people and the American people, that that will be reflected in our governments' relationships and that we will continue to make progress in the coming years.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Thank you for an excellent conversation and an excellent visit.

Prime Minister Sharif. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. President, for your gracious invitation and the warm welcome accorded to me and members of my delegation. Thank you for your support to democracy and good wishes for the people of Pakistan.

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I just had a most cordial and comprehensive exchange of views with President Obama on matters of bilateral interest and issues of regional concern. I have conveyed to the President the warm and cordial greetings of the people of Pakistan for the friendly people of the United States of America.

Over the past 65 years, our two nations have traveled together as friends and allies in defense of freedom and the pursuit of international peace and security. Besides shared history, our two countries are bound by a common commitment to the cherished values of democracy.

In today's meeting with the President, I apprised him of my government's domestic and foreign policy priorities. We also discussed a common vision to build a robust bilateral cooperation. A broad-based, stable, and enduring partnership founded on the principles of mutual respect and mutual interest serve us best.

At the domestic level, my government is focused on four key areas, and I have discussed this with Mr. President: that is economy, energy, education, and combating extremism. We both agreed that progress in these core areas is indispensable for creating new opportunities and building a hopeful future for our next generation.

Energy security is another high priority for my government. I have conveyed our deep appreciation to President Obama for the United States support in this sector. Forging a strong, great economic and investment partnership with the United States is of paramount importance for us. In this regard, we have discussed a number of ideas and look forward to further discussions between our experts in the coming weeks and months.

Pakistan and the United States have a strong ongoing counterterrorism cooperation. We have agreed to further strengthen this cooperation. I also brought up the issue of drones in our meeting, emphasizing the need for an end to such strikes.

On the regional plane, I apprised President Obama of my efforts to build a peaceful and prosperous neighborhood. In particular, I highlighted our recent initiatives with regard to Afghanistan and India.

As regards Afghanistan, let there be no doubt about our commitment for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. This resolve remains unwavering. As in the past, we will continue to engage the United States of America in building a united, peaceful, and stable Afghanistan.

I told President Obama about my sincere commitment to build a cordial and cooperative relationship with India and our efforts to peacefully resolve all our outstanding issues, including Kashmir. Terrorism constitutes a common threat. It is as much a concern to us as it is for India. We need to allay our respective concerns through serious and sincere efforts, without indulging into any blame game. I also assured the President that as a responsible nuclear state, Pakistan would continue to act with maximum restraint and work towards strengthening strategic stability in South Asia.

Mr. President, I admire your statesmanship, your wisdom, and your commitment to high values of peace and stability around the world. I thank you once again and look forward to welcoming you and Mr. Obama—and Mrs. Obama in Pakistan. And *keema* and *dal* is waiting for you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Muhammad H. Chandoo and Wahid Hamid, who accompanied the President on a visit to Karachi, Pakistan, in 1981.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan
October 23, 2013

At the invitation of President Obama, Prime Minister Sharif paid an official visit to Washington from October 20 to 23, 2013, marking the commitment of both Leaders to strengthen U.S.-Pakistan relations and advance shared interests in a stable, secure, and prosperous Pakistan and region.

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif held wide-ranging discussions at the White House today about the importance of a U.S.-Pakistan partnership built on a foundation of mutual interest and respect. They acknowledged the substantial progress in the bilateral relationship over the last year and noted its resilient nature. The President and the Prime Minister affirmed U.S.-Pakistan friendship and close cooperation and recalled our positive contributions to international peace and security at crucial junctures during the Cold War and in the post-9/11 period. Reaffirming the strong relationship between the two countries, they stressed that our enduring partnership is

based on the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. They expressed their conviction that an enduring U.S.-Pakistan partnership is vital to regional and international security and recognized their shared interest in Pakistan's economic growth and development, regional stability, and mutually determined measures to counter terrorism. President Obama conveyed appreciation for Pakistan's internal and regional security challenges and affirmed that a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Pakistan was an essential partner for the United States in the advancement of shared goals of peace, security, and socio-economic development in South Asia.

Shared Democratic Values

President Obama congratulated Prime Minister Sharif on being elected to office in the historic May elections, observing that the smooth democratic transition between two elected governments was a milestone for the democratic institutions in Pakistan. Affirming that both the United States and Pakistan are committed to democracy, human rights, freedom, and respect for international law, President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif dedicated themselves to deepening and enhancing the relationship between the peoples of the United States and Pakistan.

An Enduring Partnership

Both leaders welcomed the resumption of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue and reaffirmed its importance as the suitable framework for guiding the bilateral relationship. They emphasized that the dialogue should focus on people-centered initiatives and on results-oriented outcomes in support of the long-term stability, prosperity, and security of both the United States and Pakistan. They discussed the forthcoming Ministerial-level Strategic Dialogue, which Secretary Kerry would be hosting in Washington by March 2014. They also decided on the strategic priorities for the five working groups including: 1) Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism; 2) Economics and Finance; 3) Energy; 4) Security, Strategic Stability, and Non-Proliferation; and 5) the Defense Consultative Group.

The Leaders underscored the importance of further reinforcing the positive momentum in the bilateral relationship by promoting people-to-people contacts, including parliamentary exchanges. In this context, they also lauded the valuable role played by the Pakistani Diaspora in the United States in bringing the two countries together.

Economic Growth, Energy, and Social Sector Cooperation

Prime Minister Sharif highlighted his government's efforts for economic growth, energy security, social development, and good governance. He thanked President Obama for the important contribution the United States has made in supporting Pakistan's development efforts, including through the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009. The Leaders discussed the Prime Minister's deep commitment to increasing economic growth in Pakistan and to taking the steps necessary to put Pakistan on a path of long-term economic growth and stability. The President gave the assurance that the United States would strongly support efforts to enlarge and strengthen Pakistan's economy, particularly in the energy sector, as this sector could play a critical role in ensuring the well-being and prosperity of the people of Pakistan.

President Obama reiterated U.S. support for ongoing programs to strengthen Pakistan's economy and increased agricultural productivity. He also pledged continued support to help Pakistan address its energy shortfall, a key focus of U.S. assistance to Pakistan. Noting that resolving Pakistan's energy crisis is a top priority for his government, Prime Minister Sharif expressed his commitment to expand power generation capacity, promote the efficient use of energy resources, and better utilize Pakistan's domestic natural gas, hydroelectric, and renewable resources.

The Leaders emphasized that both sides should work together on a range of options to enable Pakistan to overcome its energy deficiencies and that both sides will hold further

discussions in the working groups on Energy and Security, Strategic Stability, and Non-Proliferation. President Obama noted that U.S. assistance in the energy sector has added over 1,000 megawatts of power to Pakistan's national grid, helping over 16 million Pakistanis. Prime Minister Sharif expressed appreciation for U.S. assistance toward the construction and rehabilitation of Gomal Zam, Satpara, Mangla, and Tarbela dams and the modernization of Guddu, Jamshoro, and Muzaffargarh power plants, and the Leaders highlighted the recent Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) loan for private sector wind development in Sindh. Prime Minister Sharif also thanked President Obama for U.S. support toward the Diamer-Bhasha and Dasu dams, which are critical to meeting Pakistan's long-term energy and water needs. He also welcomed the announcement of funding for the Kaitu Weir Hydroelectric and Irrigation Project, which will increase Pakistan's overall energy production, expand the amount of irrigated land, and provide livelihood options for residents of North Waziristan. The two Leaders looked forward to the meeting of the Working Group on Energy in November 2013, followed by a U.S.-organized Pakistani trade mission to Houston, Texas, to meet with major U.S. energy companies. In preparation for this working group, the two Leaders instructed their teams to develop a U.S. technical assistance program to support the development of Pakistan's domestic natural gas reserves.

President Obama also reaffirmed U.S. support in key areas such as economic growth, agriculture, health, and education. The President highlighted that the United States remains Pakistan's largest export market and one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in Pakistan. The Prime Minister welcomed U.S. support to private sector–led growth and job creation in Pakistan, including through the Pakistan Private Investment Initiative (PPII) launched at the jointly sponsored Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference in Dubai in June 2013, which would make a matching investment of $100 million in the development and expansion of small and medium size businesses in Pakistan.

Prime Minister Sharif highlighted his keen interest in expanding bilateral trade and investment, and the two Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to this end. The two Leaders pledged to continue this discussion through the Strategic Dialogue process and noted that the United States-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) is the key vehicle to promote U.S. investments in Pakistan. The President announced that United States Trade Representative Michael Froman would invite his counterpart to Washington for a TIFA Council meeting, at which these issues could be discussed in greater depth. The two Leaders directed their senior officials to develop a joint action plan to expand trade and investment flows between the United States and Pakistan over the next five years and expressed their intention to hold the third U.S.-Pakistan Economic Opportunities Conference in the next year. Both leaders affirmed their commitment to the multilateral trading system and to a successful 9th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Bali.

Expressing satisfaction at the implementation of the 2003 Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation between the United States and Pakistan and acknowledging its significance in promoting a decade of intensified cooperation between the two countries, the two Leaders decided to extend the agreement through 2018. They also discussed the importance of investing in Pakistan's growing youth population through high-quality education programs. President Obama reiterated that U.S. assistance for education in Pakistan has built or rehabilitated over 600 schools, provided 12,000 university scholarships to Pakistani students, trained more than 10,000 teachers and school administrators, and provided more U.S.-funded scholarships under the prestigious Fulbright program in Pakistan than anywhere else in the world. These investments help prepare Pakistan's younger generation to enter the job market and become leaders in their country and communities, and the two Leaders expressed their shared intent to further promote

educational and research opportunities for Pakistani students, scholars, and researchers in U.S. institutions. President Obama also highlighted the announcement of the USAID Reading Initiative, which is aimed at helping over 3.2 million Pakistani school children learn to read.

Defense Cooperation

Taking note of the robust bilateral defense cooperation between their two countries—including recent military engagements, exercises, and consultations on regional security—President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif expressed satisfaction with the positive momentum achieved in defense relations and reaffirmed that this partnership should continue to grow and endure. The two Leaders noted with satisfaction that the Ground Lines of Communication (GLOCs) are facilitating the movement of U.S. and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) cargo through Pakistan.

Prime Minister Sharif conveyed appreciation for U.S. security assistance in support of Pakistan's counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, counternarcotics, and maritime security operations and expressed hope of broadening bilateral defense cooperation in areas that serve mutual interest. To bolster these efforts, the United States plans to continue providing assistance and support, including training and equipment to Pakistan's military and security services. The two Leaders decided to strengthen their cooperation, including in regional maritime security. President Obama noted Pakistan's positive efforts to counter improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and both leaders resolved to continue working together to disrupt the threat posed by these devices. President Obama commended the resolve of the government and people of Pakistan, armed forces, and law enforcement agencies to defeat terrorists and praised Pakistan for its military campaign. They shared their mutual conviction that a stable and peaceful Pakistan-Afghanistan border was important for the success of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and counter-IED efforts, and they underscored the critical significance of effective border coordination mechanisms between Pakistan and Afghanistan in achieving these objectives.

Counterterrorism

Both President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Prime Minister shared his perspective on effective counterterrorism cooperation to achieve the mutual objective of defeating terrorism. President Obama thanked Prime Minister Sharif for Pakistan's efforts to help defeat al-Qa'ida, and both Leaders expressed their deep appreciation for the sacrifices of military personnel and civilians in the fight against terrorism and extremism. The two Leaders emphasized that no country's territory should be used to destabilize its neighbors. Further, the Leaders noted that extremism and terrorism represent a common challenge for humanity and that the solution lies in collaboration and joint efforts by the international community.

Nonproliferation, Nuclear Security and Strategic Stability

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif emphasized that nuclear terrorism is one of the most challenging threats to international security. President Obama appreciated Pakistan's constructive engagement with the Nuclear Security Summit process and its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international forums, while acknowledging Pakistan's efforts to improve its strategic trade controls and enhance its engagement with multilateral export regimes. Looking ahead to the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit at the Hague, the two Leaders reaffirmed the commitments of the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, strengthening nuclear security; reducing the threat of nuclear terrorism; preventing terrorists, criminals, or other unauthorized actors from acquiring nuclear materials; and working closely for the objectives of the Summit. They acknowledged the importance of regional balance and stability in South Asia and pursuing increased transparency and

uninterrupted dialogue in support of peaceful resolutions of all outstanding issues. Prime Minister Sharif affirmed Pakistan's support for the universal objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament. The two Leaders underscored that all sides should continuously act with maximum restraint and work jointly toward strengthening strategic stability in South Asia. Prime Minister Sharif expressed Pakistan's desire to join the multilateral export regimes. President Obama reiterated his confidence in Pakistan's commitment and dedication to nuclear security and recognized that Pakistan is fully engaged with the international community on nuclear safety and security issues.

Regional Cooperation

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif renewed their determination to promote peace, stability, and transparency throughout the region. They committed to work together to combat international terrorism and extremism and to promote peace and prosperity.

The two leaders welcomed progress on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project, and tasked the Energy Working Group to explore possible further U.S. support for the Central Asia-South Asia electricity line, CASA–1000, in close collaboration with the World Bank. Prime Minister Sharif expressed appreciation for the development and rehabilitation by the U.S. government of roads in Pakistan's border areas, including the four major transit routes between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both sides emphasized the need to maintain and enhance the GLOCs' relevant infrastructure, and Prime Minister Sharif welcomed the recently signed agreement between Pakistan's National Highway Authority and USAID to rehabilitate 247 kilometers of the Kalat-Chaman road, which will help pave the way for regional trade by linking Kandahar to Quetta and to the port of Karachi.

The President and Prime Minister reaffirmed that a peaceful, stable, independent, and united Afghanistan is in the interest of the region. They welcomed the ongoing security transition in Afghanistan and Afghan-led preparations for next April's presidential elections. The two Leaders recognized the important role of countries in the region in supporting Afghanistan's progress toward stability and prosperity and stressed that continued engagement by the international community in Afghanistan's economic and social development and reconstruction would be essential in ensuring the long-term security and prosperity of the Afghan people. Prime Minister Sharif also underlined that the support of the international community in the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and their reintegration in Afghanistan was of critical importance to Pakistan. The two Leaders emphasized their support for a policy of non-interference in Afghanistan.

The Leaders affirmed their commitment to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process as the surest way to end violence and bring lasting stability to Afghanistan and the region. Acknowledging Pakistan's efforts to support an inclusive reconciliation process in which Afghans determine the future of their country, both Leaders called on the Taliban to join the political process and enter into dialogue with the Afghan government.

The two Leaders stressed that improvement in Pakistan-India bilateral relations would greatly enhance prospects for lasting regional peace, stability, and prosperity, as it would significantly benefit the lives of citizens on both sides of the border. In this context, President Obama welcomed recent engagements between Prime Minister Sharif and Prime Minister Singh and expressed hope that this would mark the beginning of a sustained dialogue process between the two neighbors, aimed at building lasting peace in South Asia and resolving all outstanding territorial and other disputes through peaceful means. President Obama welcomed steps taken by Pakistan and India to improve their economic relations, including by exploring electricity and gas supply agreements, developing a reciprocal visa regime, and expanding bilateral trade.

Conclusion

President Obama thanked the Prime Minister for visiting the United States, and both Leaders committed themselves to remaining in close contact and to continuing their efforts to build a strong, broad-based, long-term, and enduring relationship between the United States and Pakistan that should serve as a foundation for the stability and prosperity of the region and around the globe.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the Terrorist Attack on the United States Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon

October 23, 2013

Thirty years ago today, 220 marines, 18 sailors, and 3 soldiers lost their lives to a Hizballah suicide bomber who attacked the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. Minutes later, 58 French paratroopers lost their lives when a second Hizballah suicide bomber attacked the French barracks. This despicable act of terrorism was the deadliest single day death toll for the U.S. Marine Corps since the World War II Battle of Iwo Jima.

Our marines and their fellow servicemembers were serving in Beirut as part of a multinational force during the Lebanese civil war to help bring stability to a troubled region and to defend our strategic interests in the Middle East. They came in peace.

Our 241 servicemembers will be remembered in ceremonies at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, at the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, and in homes around the United States. We join with the families and their loved ones in paying tribute to the fallen and in sharing our deep appreciation for the ultimate sacrifice made in service to our Nation. We also honor the courage and bravery of those warriors who survived the attack and spent days digging their brothers out of the rubble. They were faithful to their comrades in arms and served with honor and distinction in the finest tradition of the U.S. military.

The proud history of the U.S. military continues today as our servicemembers risk their lives around the world to promote freedom and security and to deter terrorism. We are grateful for their sacrifices and honored by their commitment to defending our Nation, our citizens, and our values.

We also renew our commitment to promoting Lebanon's stability, sovereignty, and independence and to our partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces. We continue to support the Lebanese people as they seek to form a government that reflects their aspirations and that will strengthen Lebanon's ability to defend its national interests and meet its international obligations.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

October 23, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the

enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared in Executive Order 13413 of October 27, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond October 27, 2013.

The situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been marked by widespread violence and atrocities that continue to threaten regional stability, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13413 with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Immigration Reform
October 24, 2013

The President. Thank you very much. Well, please have a seat, everybody. Good morning, and welcome to the White House. Today I'm here with leaders from business, from labor, from faith communities who are united around one goal: finishing the job of fixing a broken immigration system.

This is not just an idea whose time has come, this is an idea whose time has been around for years now. Leaders like all of you have worked together with Republicans and Democrats in this town in good faith for years to try to get this done. And this is the moment when we should be able to finally get the job done.

Now, it's no secret that the American people haven't seen much out of Washington that they like these days. The shutdown and the threat of the first default in more than 200 years inflicted real pain on our businesses and on families across the country. And it was a completely unnecessary, self-inflicted wound, with real costs to real people, and it can never happen again.

But even with the shutdown over and the threat of default eliminated, Democrats and Republicans still have some really big disagreements; there are some just fundamentally different views about how we should move forward on certain issues. On the other hand, as I said the day after the shutdown ended, that's no reason that we shouldn't be able to work together on the things that we do agree on.

We should be able to work together on a responsible budget that invests in the things that we need to grow our economy and create jobs even while we maintain fiscal discipline. We should be able to pass a farm bill that helps rural communities grow and protects vulnerable Americans in hard times.

And we should pass immigration reform. [*Applause*] We should pass immigration reform. It's good for our economy. It's good for our national security. It's good for our people. And we should do it this year.

Everybody knows that our current immigration system is broken. Across the political spectrum, people understand that. We've known it for years. It's not smart to invite some of the brightest minds from around the world to study here and then not let them start businesses here; we send them back to their home countries to start businesses and create jobs and invent new products someplace else.

It's not fair to businesses and middle class families who play by the rules when we allow companies that are trying to undercut the rules work in the shadow economy, to hire folks at lower wages or no benefits, no overtime, so that somehow they get a competitive edge from breaking the rules. That doesn't make sense.

It doesn't make sense to have 11 million people who are in this country illegally without any incentive or any way for them to come out

of the shadows, get right with the law, meet their responsibilities, and permit their families then to move ahead. It's not smart. It's not fair. It doesn't make sense. We have kicked this particular can down the road for too long.

Now, the good news is, this year, the Senate has already passed an immigration reform bill by a wide, bipartisan majority that addressed all of these issues. It's a bill that would continue to strengthen our borders. It would level the playing field by holding unscrupulous employers accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers.

It would modernize our legal immigration system so that even as we train American workers for the jobs of the future, we're also attracting highly skilled entrepreneurs from beyond our borders to join with us to create jobs here in the United States.

It would make sure that everybody plays by the same rules by providing a pathway to earned citizenship for those who are here illegally: one that includes passing a background check, learning English, paying taxes, paying a penalty, getting in line behind everyone who is trying to come here the right way.

So it had all the component parts. It didn't have everything that I wanted, it didn't have anything—everything that anybody wanted, but it addressed the core challenges of how we create a immigration system that is fair, that's just, that is true to our traditions as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And that's passed the Senate by a bipartisan majority.

So here's what we also know: that the bill would grow the economy and shrink our deficits. Independent economists have shown that if the Senate bill became law, over the next two decades, our economy would grow by $1.4 trillion more than it would if we don't pass the law. It would reduce our deficits by nearly a trillion dollars.

So this isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. Securing our borders, modernizing our legal immigration system, providing a pathway to earned, legalized citizenship, growing our economy, strengthening our middle class, reducing our deficits—that's what commonsense immigration reform will do.

Now, obviously, just because something is smart and fair and good for the economy and fiscally responsible and supported by business and labor—[*laughter*]—and the evangelical community and many Democrats and many Republicans, that does not mean that it will actually get done. [*Laughter*] This is Washington, after all.

So everything tends to be viewed through a political prism, and everybody has been looking at the politics of this. And I know that there are some folks in this town who are primed to think, "Well, if Obama is for it, then I'm against it." But I'd remind everybody that my Republican predecessor was also for it when he proposed reforms like this almost a decade ago, and I joined with 23 Senate Republicans back then to support that reform. I'd remind you that this reform won more than a dozen Republican votes in the Senate in June.

I'm not running for office again. I just believe this is the right thing to do. [*Applause*] I just believe this is the right thing to do. And I also believe that good policy is good politics in this instance. And if folks are really that consumed with the politics of fixing our broken immigration system, they should look—take a closer look at the polls, because the American people support this. It's not something they reject; they support it. Everybody wins here if we work together to get this done. In fact, if there's a good reason not to pass this commonsense reform, I haven't heard it.

So anyone still standing in the way of this bipartisan reform should at least have to explain why. A clear majority of the American people think it's the right thing to do.

Now, how do we move forward? Democrats—Democratic leaders have introduced a bill in the House that is similar to the bipartisan Senate bill. So now it's up to Republicans in the House to decide whether reform becomes a reality or not.

I do know—and this is good news—that many of them agree that we need to fix our broken immigration system across these areas that we've just discussed. And what I've said to them, and I'll repeat today, is if House Republicans have new and different, additional ideas

for how we should move forward, then we want to hear them. I'll be listening. I know that Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, those who voted for immigration reform already, are eager to hear those additional ideas. But what we can't do is just sweep the problem under the rug one more time, leave it for somebody else to solve sometime in the future.

Rather than create problems, let's prove to the American people that Washington can actually solve some problems. This reform comes as close to anything we've got to a law that will benefit everybody now and far into the future. So let's see if we can get this done. And let's see if we can get it done this year.

Now, the—we've got the time to do it. Republicans in the House, including the Speaker, have said we should act. So let's not wait. It doesn't get easier to just put it off. Let's do it now. Let's not delay. Let's get this done, and let's do it in a bipartisan fashion.

To those of you who are here today, I want to just say one last thing, and that is, thank you. I want to thank you for your persistence. I want to thank you for your activism. I want to thank you for your passion and your heart when it comes to this issue. And I want to tell you, you've got to keep it up. Keep putting the pressure on all of us to get this done. There are going to be moments—and there are always moments like this in big efforts at reform—where you meet resistance and the press will declare something dead, it's not going to happen, but that can be overcome.

And I have to say, Joe, as I look out at this room, these don't look like people who are easily deterred. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Joe Biden. No, I don't think so.

The President. They don't look like folks who are going to give up. You look fired up to make the next push. And whether you're a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent, I want you to keep working—and I'm going to be right next to you—to make sure we get immigration reform done. It is time. Let's go get it done.

Thank you very much, everybody. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at Pathways in Technology Early College High School in New York City

October 25, 2013

The President. Hello, Brooklyn! How you doing?

Audience members. Good!

The President. Well, it is good to be back in Brooklyn. Good to be in New York City. And it is good to see some friends who stick up for students and teachers and education every day. We've got your Governor; Andrew Cuomo is in the house. Give him a big round of applause. We've got your Senator, Chuck Schumer. Outstanding Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. We've got a—your outstanding congressional delegation is here. Give them a big round of applause. We've got your Public Advocate and my friend, Bill de Blasio is here. We've got the outstanding leader of one of America's iconic companies, IBM CEO Ginni Rometty. And I want to give a special shoutout to a man who's been an extraordinary mayor for this city; he's been a leader throughout the country for the past 12 years. Mr. Michael Bloomberg is here.

And I want to thank your principal here at P–TECH, Rashid Davis, who, I am pretty confident, is the coolest looking principal in America. [*Laughter*] I mean, there just are not that many principals with dreadlocks and yellow kicks. There aren't that many of them. I mean, there may be some, but there aren't that many. [*Laughter*]

And I had a wonderful time visiting with one of your teachers, Ms. Seiluffah—Seifullah, Seifullah? Ms. Seifullah. She was outstanding. She welcomed me into her classroom. She showed

me around. I want to thank all of you for letting me spend some time here. In return, you got out of class a little early on Friday, which I know always gets a little applause, although, in this school maybe not, because you guys are enjoying learning so much. [*Applause*] That's worth applauding, that you're enjoying learning so much.

Now, part of the reason I'm glad to be here is because I used to live in Brooklyn, and I actually landed Marine One in Prospect Park; I used to live across the street from Prospect Park and—[*applause*]. But mainly, I'm here because I wanted to talk—I wanted to come here ever since I talked about you in my State of the Union Address this year because what's going on here at P–TECH is outstanding, and I'm excited to see it for myself.

I know Brooklyn in general is blowing up right now. It—when I was living here, Brooklyn was cool, but not this cool. [*Laughter*] Barclays Center hadn't been built yet. I know the Nets just picked up Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett offseason, which is a lesson to all the young people: Old people can still play. [*Laughter*] We've still got some gas in the tank.

But this whole borough is where generations of hopeful, striving immigrants came in search of opportunity: a chance to build better lives for themselves and for their kids. And that's been true for decades. And I'm here today to talk about what we need to do as a country to build the same kind of opportunity for your generation, for the next generation, and for your kids and for future immigrants.

This country should be doing everything in our power to give more kids the chance to go to schools just like this one. We should be doing everything we can to put college within the reach of more young people. We should be doing everything we can to keep your streets safe and protect you from gun violence. We should be doing everything we can to keep families from falling into poverty and build more ladders of opportunity to help people who are willing to work hard climb out of poverty. We should be doing everything we can to welcome new generations of hopeful, striving immigrants.

I want to—I want us to do everything we can to give every single young person the same kind of opportunity that this country gave me and gave Chuck and gave Governor Cuomo and gave Mayor Bloomberg and gave your principal. That's what I'm focused on.

Yes, by the way, if you have chairs, go ahead and sit down. [*Laughter*] If you don't have chairs, then don't sit down because you'll fall. [*Laughter*] I didn't realize everybody had chairs there. I would have told you to sit down earlier. [*Laughter*]

So that's what we can achieve together. It's possible. We know we can do it. P–TECH is proof of what can be accomplished, but we've got to have the courage to do it. The American people work hard, and they try to do right, day in and day out. And that resilience and that toughness helped to turn our economy around after one of the hardest periods that we've ever faced as a country. But what we also need is some political courage in Washington. We don't always see that.

Right now we need to all pull together. We need to work together to grow the economy, not shrink it; to create good jobs, not eliminate jobs. We've got to finish building a new foundation for shared and lasting prosperity so that everybody who works hard, everybody who studies hard at a school like this one or schools all across the country have a chance to get ahead. That's what we need to do. That's what I'm focused on.

And that all begins with the education that we give young people. Because all of you are growing up in changing times, especially for the economy. The world you're growing up in is different than the one that previous generations here in Brooklyn knew and here—and all across the country knew.

In the old days, a young person, they might have just followed their parents' footsteps and gotten a job in their parents' line of work, keep that job for 30, 40 years. If you were willing to work hard, you didn't necessarily need a great education. If you'd just gone to high school, you might get a job at a factory or in the garment district. Or you might be able to just get a job that allowed you to earn your wages, keep

pace with people who had a chance to go to college. But those days are over, and those days are not coming back.

We live in a 21st-century global economy. And in a global economy, jobs can go anywhere. Companies, they're looking for the best educated people, wherever they live, and they'll reward them with good jobs and good pay. And if you don't have a well-educated workforce, you're going to be left behind. If you don't have a good education, then it is going to be hard for you to find a job that pays a living wage.

And by the way, other countries know this. In previous generations, America's standing economically was so much higher than everybody else's that we didn't have a lot of competition. Now you've got billions of people from Beijing to Bangalore to Moscow, all of whom are competing with you directly. And they're—those countries are working every day to outeducate and outcompete us.

And every year brings more research showing them pulling ahead, especially in some of the subject matter that this school specializes in: math and science and technology. So we've got a choice to make. We can just kind of shrug our shoulders and settle for something less, or we can do what America has always done, which is adapt. We pull together, we up our game, we hustle, we fight back, we work hard, and we win.

We have to educate our young people—every single person here, but also all the young people all across Brooklyn, all across New York City, all across New York State, and all across this country—so that you're ready for this global economy. And schools like P–TECH will help us do that.

Here at P–TECH, you've got folks from IBM, City Tech, City University of New York, City Department of Education; everybody is pulling together to make sure a high school education puts young people on a path to a good job. So you guys have opportunities here that you don't find in most high schools yet. You can take college-level courses in math and science. You can work with mentors from IBM so you're learning specific skills that you know leads to a good job. And most important, you'll graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree in computer systems or electromechanical engineering. And that means you'll be in demand. Companies will want to hire you. IBM has even said that P–TECH graduates will be first in line when you apply for jobs once you graduate.

And at a moment when the cost of higher education's—keeps going up—and Arne and I are working hard to make sure that we're doing everything we can to reduce the burden of student loans on young people—here's how much 2 years of college will cost P–TECH students and their families: Zero. Nothing. [*Applause*] Nothing. I noticed some of the parents were the first to clap. They're all, like, "Yes." [*Laughter*] They like that.

But that's a huge burden. I mean, that's thousands of dollars that you're saving, and that means when you start working, you're going to have that much less of a burden in terms of debt, which means you can afford to buy a house sooner, you can afford to start your business sooner. Radcliffe was saying how he's thinking about starting his own business. And that kind of attitude is a lot easier when you're not burdened with a lot of student loans.

So this is a ticket into the middle class, and it's available to everybody who's willing to work for it. And that's the way it should be. That's what public education is supposed to do. And the great thing is that what started small is now growing. So Governor Cuomo, he's opening up P–TECH model schools in districts throughout the State—[*applause*]—throughout the State. So all those schools together, they're going to prepare more than 6,000 high school students for good, high-skilled jobs.

Back in my hometown of Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel is opening up schools like this one. He's opening up a school, for example, called Sarah E. Goode STEM Academy. And—you've got a little Chicago person here. [*Applause*] Yes, there you go. [*Laughter*] Across the country, companies like Verizon and Microsoft and ConEd and Cisco, they saw what IBM was doing, and they said, well, this is a good idea, we can do this too. So they're

working with educators and States to replicate what you're already doing here. And you guys should feel good about that. You're starting something all across the country.

So as a country, we should all want what all of you are receiving right now, the same chance for a great education. Here's what I think we should do as a country to make sure they've got the same opportunities you do. First of all, we've got to give every child an earlier start at success by making high-quality preschool available to every 4-year-old in America.

We should give every student access to the world's information. When I went into the classroom today, young people were working off computers, and the problem is, a lot of places, even if they've got computers, they're not hooked up to wireless. So what we're doing is having the Federal agencies moving forward on a plan to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet within 5 years. We were already moving on that front.

We need to bring down the cost of college and give more young people the chance to go to college. So a couple of months ago, I put forward an ambitious new plan to do that, to reduce the cost of college.

We need to redesign more of our high schools so that they teach young people the skills required for a high-tech economy. So I've been meeting with business leaders and innovative educators to spread the best ideas.

And I also want to congratulate Governor Cuomo and all of you in New York for having the courage to raise your standards for teaching and learning to make sure that more students graduate from high school ready for college and a career. It's not easy, but it's the right thing to do. It's going to prepare more young people for today's economy. We should stay at it.

And here's one more thing we should do, and that is just remember, none of this works unless we've got outstanding teachers, which means we've got to make sure that we're funding education so that teachers have the support that they need so that they can support their own families so that they're not having to dig into their pockets for school supplies. And we've got to show them the respect and provide pathways of excellence for teachers so that they're treated like the professionals that they are. It is a hard job, and we've got to make sure we're investing in them.

Now, some of these ideas I've laid out before; some of them I'm just going ahead and doing on my own. Some of them do require Congress to do something. [*Laughter*] And one way we can start is by Congress passing a budget that reflects our need to invest in our young people. I know that budgets aren't the most interesting topic for a Friday afternoon, even at a school where young people like math. And by the way, I just sat in on a lesson called real-world math, which got me thinking whether it's too late to send Congress here—[*laughter*]—for a remedial course.

But a budget is important, because what a budget does is, it sets our priorities. It tells us what we think is important, what our priorities are. And the stakes for our middle class could not be higher. If we don't set the right priorities now, then many of you will be put at a competitive disadvantage compared to other countries. If you think education is expensive, wait until you see how much ignorance costs. So we've got to invest.

So we need a budget that is responsible, that is fiscally prudent, but a budget that cuts what we don't need, closes wasteful tax loopholes that don't create jobs, freeing up resources to invest in the things that actually do help us grow: things like education and scientific research, and infrastructure, roads, bridges, airports. This should not be an ideological exercise. We should use some common sense.

What's going to help us grow, what's going to create jobs, what is going to expand our middle class, what's going to give more opportunity to young people—those are the things we should be putting money into. That's what we need to do.

And we've got enough resources to do it if we stop spending on things that don't work and don't make sense, or if we make sure that people aren't wiggling out of their taxes through these corporate loopholes that only a few people at the very top can take advantage of. If we just do everything in a fair, commonsense way,

we've got the resources to be fiscally responsible and invest in our future.

And this obsession with cutting just for the sake of cutting hasn't helped our economy grow, it's held it back. It won't help us build a better society for your generation. And by the way, it's important to remember—for those who are following the news—our deficits are getting smaller. They've been cut in half since I took office. All right? So that gives us room to fix longer term debt problems without sticking it to your generation. We don't have to choose between growth and fiscal responsibility; we've got to do both. And the question can't just be how much more we can cut, it's got to be how many more schools like P–TECH we can create. That should be our priority.

And after the manufactured crisis that Congress—actually, a small group in the House of Representatives just put us through, shutting down the Government and threatening to potentially default on our debt—I don't want to hear the same old stuff about how America can't afford to invest in the things that have always made us strong. Don't tell me we can afford to shut down the Government, which cost our economy billions of dollars, but we can't afford to invest in our education systems. Because there's nothing more important than this.

In fact, what I'd like to do is have every Member of Congress—maybe Chuck can arrange, and the congressional delegation can arrange, some tours for some of their colleagues. Come here. Come to Brooklyn. Meet some of these young people. They ought to meet some of the young people here.

Meet somebody like Leslieanne John, young woman who sang the national anthem this afternoon. Leslieanne is in the 11th grade, she's already taken eight college classes, which is about as many as I took when I was in college. [*Laughter*] She knows she has a great opportunity here; she's working hard to make the most of it. Eventually, she plans to become a lawyer.

And Leslieanne is clear eyed about the challenges that the students here face. She put it in a way that a lot of people can relate to; she said, "We see a whole bunch of craziness going on in the streets of Crown Heights sometimes." That's what she said. But she also said that being here at P–TECH taught her something important: "There's more for us than just the streets." And she said that "At the end of the day, we've got to make something of ourselves." And that's important, that's important.

It's not just what the government or adults can do for you, it's also what you can do for yourselves. And that sense of responsibility, that sense that you set the bar high for yourself, that's what America is all about. That's been the history of New York: people working hard, but also working together to make sure that everybody has got a fair shot; to make sure you don't have to be born wealthy, you don't have to be born famous; that if you've got some drive and some energy, then you can go to a school that teaches you what you need to know. You can go to college even if you don't have a lot of money. You can start your own business even if you didn't inherit a business.

Making something of ourselves, that's what we do in this country. That's a message worth sending to Washington. No more games, no more gridlock, no more gutting the things that help America grow and give people the tools to make something of themselves. That's what this is about. That's what P–TECH represents; that's what Brooklyn represents.

And as long as I have the privilege to be your President, I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that no matter who you are, where you come from, what you look like, this country will always be a place where you can make it if you try.

So thank you, Brooklyn. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jamillah Seifullah, teacher, Pathways in Technology Early College High School; Paul Pierce, strong forward, and Kevin Garnett, power forward, National Basketball Association's Brooklyn Nets; and Radcliffe Saddler, student, Pathways in Technology Early College High School, who introduced the President.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in New York City

October 25, 2013

Good to see you. Thank you, everybody, thank you! Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat, have a seat. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you so much to all of you, not just for what you're doing now for the Democratic Party, but what so many of you have done in the past.

There are a couple of people I want to acknowledge. Obviously, first of all, Dennis and Karen, thank you so much for your incredible hospitality. To Ken and Kathryn, thank you so much for everything that you do as well. Our outstanding leader in the House of Representatives and inductee into the Women's Hall of Fame, Nancy Pelosi. Steve Israel, for the thankless, but critical job that he has done, thank you. And then three outstanding members of the delegation—Nita Lowey, Tim Bishop, and Paul Tonko—thank you, guys, for the great work that you guys do.

I want to spend most of my time just answering questions and having a good conversation with you. But today I had this wonderful visit in the afternoon—some of you may have seen—I went over to P–TECH, a high school collaboration with not only the New York public school system, but also with IBM and the city colleges and the CUNY system. And the concept is that we can get young people engaged in STEM education—science, technology, engineering, math—and create a pathway for them so that they enter in ninth grade and they can go through, effectively, grade 14, and by the time they finish, not only have they completed their high school degree, they've completed an associate's degree. And IBM has basically designed the curriculum in such a way where these young people are at the front of the line in applying for jobs with IBM.

And there are mentorship programs, and these young people—I had a chance to spend time in the classroom, and they were incredible. And they were doing projects, and they were working on computers, and they had a peer teaching system. And I asked them if they could help me help Malia with some math homework because—[*laughter*]—I don't know if some of you have experienced this, where you get to the point where your children ask you for help and you suddenly realize you have no idea what's going on. [*Laughter*]

And the enthusiasm and the sense of possibility that these young people expressed made you incredibly optimistic about the country. And that's what we should be thinking about every single day. That's what Washington should be about every single day. Because there are young people like that all across the country where, when you meet them, you're optimistic. Regardless of the news, regardless of the blogs, when you see what's happening on the ground, it reminds you of why this is the greatest country on Earth.

Now, that spirit obviously hasn't always been reflected in Washington, and we just went through an episode that expressed Washington's dysfunctions in ways that we haven't seen in quite some time. I don't have to comment on it too much. I think everybody saw how destructive it was. But it was a symptom of a larger challenge that we have, and that's that too often, our politics have become detached from the day-to-day lives of ordinary people and ideology ends up overcoming common sense, and folks are more determined to beat the other side than they are to actually deliver for the people who sent them there. And that's why the stakes for next year are high, and that's why the commitment that all of you have expressed by being here tonight is so important.

If you scan this room and you talk to people, my suspicion is there are a wide range of views on a lot of issues: on social issues, on economic issues. We're not uniform. And one of the great things about the Democratic Party has always been that there is a lot of room for dissent. It's not always pleasant for me and Nancy, but it's healthy, because our basic principle is, how do we get at the right answer, how do we figure out a problem in front of us and make sure that in everything we do, we're

keeping uppermost in our minds providing opportunity and growing the economy and creating jobs and building a middle class. And we don't assume that we have a monopoly on wisdom, and so we want that debate and that discussion.

So not everybody here agrees on everything, but we agree on the vision of what this country should be, that it is one in which opportunity and prosperity should be broad based. We believe that every child should have a chance, regardless of what they look like, where they come from, what their last name is. We believe in treating everybody fairly, regardless of what they look like or who they love or what God they worship. And we believe that government has a role to play. And part of what the debate and the battle has been about over the last several years—what role do we have as a country, collectively, to create the platform and the tools for people to succeed.

So the shutdown was about more than just health care. It was about sort of a contrast in visions about what our obligations are to each other as fellow citizens. And we've got the better side of that argument, one that's truer to our history. But we're going to have to continue to push. We're going to have to continue to fight.

As we close out the new year, we still have a chance to get immigration reform done and a chance to affirm that we're a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. As we come to the end of the year, we still have a chance to do something like the farm bill that is important for rural America, but is also important for making sure that kids don't go hungry in this country and we've got a budget that is going to have to reflect our priorities. And if we're not investing in places like P–TECH, if we're not investing in science and technology, if we're not making sure that we're rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our airports—if we're not doing those things, then we're not true to the vision that allowed a lot of us to be in a room like this even though we weren't born into a room like this.

So the stakes are high. And the one thing I'm absolutely confident about is that if we work hard, that we can make a case to the American people and we can win. Because what we care about—and what was expressed in that school that I was in today—is what this country is all about. And what I also know is, is that when Nancy Pelosi is Speaker of the House of Representatives, she acts on behalf of that vision, even when it's hard and even when it's inconvenient and even when it runs contrary to the politics and the polls. I've seen it before, and I'll see it again. But I'll only be able to see it because of all of you.

So thank you so much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:38 p.m. at the residence of Dennis and Karen Mehiel. In his remarks, he referred to Kenneth I. Chenault, chairman and chief executive officer, American Express Co., and his wife Kathryn; and Rep. Steven J. Israel, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. He also referred to Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P–TECH) in New York City. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
October 26, 2013

Hi, everybody. A few weeks ago, we launched an important new part of the Affordable Care Act. It's called the marketplace. And for Americans without health insurance and Americans who buy insurance on their own because they can't get it at work, it's a very big deal.

If you're one of those people, the Affordable Care Act makes you part of a big group plan for the first time. The marketplace is where you can apply and shop for affordable new health insurance choices. It gathers insurers under one system to compete for your busi-

ness. And that choice and competition have actually helped bring prices down.

Ultimately, the easiest way to buy insurance in this marketplace will be a new website, healthcare.gov. But as you may have heard, the site isn't working the way it's supposed to yet. It's frustrating for all of us who have worked so hard to make sure everyone who needs it gets health care. And it's especially frustrating for the Americans who have been trying to get covered. The site has been visited more than 20 million times so far. Nearly 700,000 people have applied for coverage already. And that proves just how much demand there is for these new, quality, affordable health care choices. And that's why, in the coming weeks, we are going to get it working as smoothly as it's supposed to. We've got people working overtime, 24/7, to boost capacity and address these problems, every single day.

But even as we improve the website, remember that the website isn't the only way to apply for coverage under these new plans. We've updated healthcare.gov to offer more information about enrolling over the phone, by mail, or in person with a specially trained navigator who can help answer your questions. Just call 1–800–318–2596 or visit localhelp.healthcare.gov. And don't worry: These plans will not sell out. We're only a few weeks into a 6-month open enrollment period, and everyone who wants insurance through the marketplace will get it.

Now, some people have poked fun at me this week for sounding like an insurance salesman. And that's okay. I'd still be out there championing this law even if the website were perfect. I'll never stop fighting to help more hard-working Americans know the economic security of health care. That's something we should all want.

That's why it's also interesting to see Republicans in Congress expressing so much concern that people are having trouble buying health insurance through the new website, especially considering they've spent the last few years so obsessed with denying those same people access to health insurance that they just shut down the Government and threatened default over it.

As I've said many times before, I'm willing to work with anyone, on any idea, who's actually willing to make this law perform better. But it's well past the time for folks to stop rooting for its failure, because hard-working, middle class families are rooting for its success.

The Affordable Care Act gives people who have been stuck with sky-high premiums because of preexisting conditions the chance to get affordable insurance for the first time. This law means that women can finally buy coverage that doesn't charge them higher premiums than men for the same care.

And everyone who already has health insurance—whether through your employer, Medicare, or Medicaid—will keep the benefits and protections this law already has put in place. Three million more young adults have health insurance on their parents' plans because of the Affordable Care Act. More than 6 million people on Medicare have saved an average of a thousand dollars on their prescription medicine because of the Affordable Care Act.

Last year, more than 8 million Americans received half a billion dollars in refunds from their insurers because of the Affordable Care Act. And for tens of millions of women, preventive care like mammograms and birth control are free because of the Affordable Care Act. That's all part of this law, and it's here to stay.

We did not fight so hard for this reform for so many years just to build a website. We did it to free millions of American families from the awful fear that one illness or injury—to yourself or your child—might cost you everything you'd worked so hard to build. We did it to cement the principle that in this country, the security of health care is not a privilege for a fortunate few, but a right for every one of us to enjoy. We've already delivered on part of that promise, and we will not rest until the work is done.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:15 p.m. on October 24 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast

on October 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 26.

Remarks at an Installation Ceremony for James B. Comey, Jr., as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
October 28, 2013

Thank you. Thank you, FBI. Thank you so much. Please, everybody, be seated, those of you who have seats. [*Laughter*]

Well, good afternoon, everybody. I am so proud to be here and to stand once again with so many dedicated men and women of the FBI. You are the best of the best. Day in and day out, you work tirelessly to confront the most dangerous threats our Nation faces. You serve with courage; you serve with integrity. You protect Americans at home and abroad. You lock up criminals. You secure the homeland against the threat of terrorism. Without a lot of fanfare, without seeking the spotlight, you do your jobs, all the while upholding our most cherished values and the rule of law.

Fidelity, Bravery, Integrity: That's your motto. And today we're here to welcome a remarkable new leader for this remarkable institution, one who lives those principles out every single day: Mr. Jim Comey.

Before I get to Jim, I want to thank all the predecessors who are here today. We are grateful for your service. I have to give a special shout-out to Bob Mueller, who served longer than he was supposed to, but he was such an extraordinary leader through some of the most difficult times that we've had in national security. And he—I consider him a friend, and I'm so grateful for him and Ann being here today. Thank you very much.

Now, Jim has dedicated his life to defending our laws, to making sure that all Americans can trust our justice system to protect their rights and their well-being. He's the grandson of a beat cop. He's the prosecutor who helped bring down the Gambinos. He's the relentless attorney who fought to stem the bloody tide of gun violence, rub out white-collar crime, deliver justice to terrorists. It's just about impossible to find a matter of justice he has not tackled, and it's hard to imagine somebody who is not more uniquely qualified to lead a bureau that covers all of it: traditional threats like violent and organized crime to the constantly changing threats like terrorism and cybersecurity. So he's got the résumé.

But of course, Jim is also a famously cool character; he's the calmest in the room during a crisis. Here's what a fellow former prosecutor said about him. He said, "You know that Rudyard Kipling line—'If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs'—that's Jim."

There's also a story from the time during his prosecution of the Gambino crime family. One of the defendants was an alleged hit man named Lorenzo. And during the trial, Jim won an award from the New York City Bar Association. When the court convened the next morning, everybody was buzzing about it, and suddenly, a note was passed down from the defendant's table across the aisle to the prosecutor's table. It was handed to Jim, and it read: "Dear Jim, congratulations on your award. No one deserves it more than you. You're a true professional. Sincerely, Lorenzo." [*Laughter*]

"Sincerely, Lorenzo." Now, we don't know how sincere he was. [*Laughter*] We don't know whether this was a veiled threat or a plea for leniency or an honest compliment. But I think it is fair to say that Jim has won the respect of folks across the spectrum, including Lorenzo. [*Laughter*]

He's the perfect leader for an organization whose walls are graced by the words of a legendary former Director: "The most effective weapon against crime is cooperation." Jim has worked with many of the more than 35,000 men and women of the FBI over the course of his long and distinguished career. And it's his admiration and respect for all of you, individu-

ally, his recognition of the hard work that you do every day, sometimes under extraordinarily difficult circumstances—not just the folks out in the field, but also folks working the back rooms, doing the hard work, out of sight—his recognition that your mission is important is what compelled him to answer the call to serve his country again.

The FBI joins forces with our intelligence, our military, and homeland security professionals to break up all manner of threats, from taking down drug rings to stopping those who prey on children, to breaking up Al Qaida cells, to disrupting their activities, thwarting their plots. And your mission keeps expanding because the nature of the threats are always changing.

Unfortunately, the resources allotted to that mission has been reduced by sequestration. I'll keep fighting for those resources because our country asks and expects a lot from you, and we should make sure you've got the resources you need to do the job. Especially when many of your colleagues put their lives on the line on a daily basis, all to serve and protect our fellow citizens, the least we can do is make sure you've got the resources for it and that your operations are not disrupted because of politics in this town.

Now, the good news is, things like courage, leadership, judgment, and compassion, those resources are—potentially, at least—inexhaustible. That's why it's critical that we seek out the best people to serve: folks who have earned the public trust, who have excellent judgment, even in the most difficult circumstances; those who possess not just a keen knowledge of the law, but also a moral compass that they—and we—can always count on.

And that's who we've got in Jim Comey. I'll tell you, I interviewed a number of extraordinary candidates for this job, all with sterling credentials. But what gave me confidence that this was the right man for the job wasn't his degrees and it wasn't his résumé, it was in talking to him and seeing his amazing family, a sense that this is somebody who knows what's right and what's wrong and is willing to act on that basis every single day. And that's why I'm so grateful that he's signed up to serve again.

I will spare you yet another joke about how today no one stands taller. [*Laughter*] I simply want to thank Jim for accepting this role. I want to thank Patrice and the five remarkable children that they've got, because jobs like this are a team effort, as you well know.

And I want to thank most all the men and women of the FBI. I'm proud of your work. I'm grateful for your service. I'm absolutely confident that this agency will continue to flourish with Jim at the helm. And if it—if he gets lost in the building, I want you guys to help him out. [*Laughter*] Because I guarantee you that he's going to have your back; make sure you've got his back as well.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

[*At this point, FBI Deputy Director Sean M. Joyce introduced Director Comey, who made brief remarks.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. at FBI Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Ann Mueller, wife of former FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III; Lorenzo Mannino, member, Gambino crime family; and Patrice Comey, wife, and Maurene, Katherine, Brien, Claire, and Abby, children, of Director Comey. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Deputy Director Joyce and Director Comey.

Statement on the Death of Former Representative Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV
October 28, 2013

For 34 years, Ike Skelton served the people of Missouri in the United States Congress. He was beloved and respected by his colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Ike was a devoted advocate for our men and women in uniform. To many in Congress and across Missouri, Ike was a mentor and a friend, and he will be missed. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to his wife Patty, his family, and loved ones.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Former Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas S. Foley
October 29, 2013

To Heather and the Foley family; to Tom's colleagues and friends; President Clinton; Vice President Mondale; former Speakers; and those who preceded me: I am honored to join you today to remember a man who embodied the virtues of devotion and respect for the institution that he led, for the colleagues that he served alongside, and most importantly, for the citizens that he had the honor to represent.

Unlike so many of you, I did not have the privilege of knowing Tom personally; I admired him from afar. But like millions of Americans, I benefit from his legacy. Thanks to Tom, more children get a Head Start on success in school and in life. More seniors receive better health care. More families breathe easier because they know their country will be there for them in times of need. And all of them—all of us—are indebted to that towering man from Spokane.

I think, in listening to the wonderful memories that have been shared, we get a sense of this man, and we recognize his humility. He often attributed much of his success to good luck, and he may have had a point. Leader McConnell told the story about his first race; there were a couple of details that got left out. On the way to Olympia to file the paperwork for his first congressional campaign, apparently, Tom blew out a tire. [*Laughter*] So he and some friends hitchhiked to a service station to get it fixed. And then, as they approached the outskirts of the city, they ran out of gas. So they pushed the car up the hill, coasting into town just before the deadline. And Tom went on to win that race by a resounding 54 votes.

So there's no question that there may have been some luck of the Irish operating when it came to Tom Foley, as well as incredible stamina. But what led him to make history as the first Speaker of the House from west of the Rockies was not luck. It was his hard work and his deep integrity and his powerful intellect, and as Bob Michel so eloquently and movingly stated, his ability to find common ground with his colleagues across the aisle. And it was his personal decency that helped him bring civility and order to a Congress that demanded both and still does.

Which brings me to a final point: At a time when our political system can seem more polarized and more divided than ever before, it can be tempting to see the possibility of bipartisan progress as a thing of the past, "old school," as Bob said. It can be tempting to wonder if we still have room for leaders like Tom, whether the environment, the media, the way that districts are drawn, and the pressures that those of us in elected office are under somehow preclude the possibility of that brand of leadership. Well, I believe we have to find our way back there.

Now more than ever, America needs public servants who are willing to place problem-solving ahead of politics, as the letter that President Clinton held up indicates, as the history of the crime bill shows. We are sent here to do what's right, and sometimes, doing what's right is hard. And it's not free. And yet that's the measure of leadership.

It's important for us who feel a responsibility to fight for a cause to recognize that our cause is not advanced if we can't also try to achieve compromise, the same way our Founders saw it: as a vital part of our democracy, the very thing that makes our system of self-government possible. That's what Tom Foley believed. That's what he embodied. That's the legacy that shines brightly today.

Now, on the last day that he presided as Speaker, Tom described what it should feel like to serve the American people in this city. He spoke about coming to work in the morning and catching a glimpse of the Capitol. And he said that it ought to give anyone a thrill, a sense not only of personal satisfaction, "but very deep gratitude to our constituents for the hon-

or of letting us represent them." And Tom never lost that sense of wonder.

It's interesting—as I read that passage, what he wrote—the first time I visited Capitol Hill, Tom Foley was Speaker. I was a very young man and I was doing community work, and I remember seeing that Capitol and having that same sense of wonder. And I think now about Tom Foley being here doing that work and inspiring what might have ultimately led me to be interested in public service as well.

When we're standing outside these magnificent buildings, we have that sense of wonder and that sense of hope. And sometimes, the longer you're here, the harder it is to hang on to that. And yet Tom Foley never lost it—never lost that sense of wonder, never lost the sense of gratitude. What a privilege, he felt it was, to serve. And he never forgot why he came here: on behalf of this Nation and his State and the citizens that he loved and respected so much.

And so, as a country, we have to be grateful to him. And to Heather and to the people of the great State of Washington, thank you so much for sharing Tom with us.

God bless Tom Foley. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. in the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Heather S. Foley, wife of former Speaker Foley; and former Rep. Robert H. Michel.

Statement on the First Anniversary of Hurricane Sandy
October 29, 2013

One year ago, Hurricane Sandy's landfall devastated communities up and down the East Coast, a tragedy that demanded massive rescue, recovery, and rebuilding efforts. Today we remember our fellow Americans who lost their lives to that storm, and we comfort the families who grieve them still. And while there are still homes to rebuild and businesses to reopen, the last year has also served as a reminder of the strength and resilience of the American people. We've seen first responders act with heroism, strangers lend a helping hand, and entire communities come together to heal. There's more work to do, but that's the spirit with which we'll continue to do it for our fellow Americans who still need a hand.

Over the past year, my administration has fought for these communities throughout the response, and the Federal Government will remain by their side as our fellow citizens rebuild. We've provided billions of dollars of assistance to hundreds of thousands of people and small-business owners through direct aid, grants, and loans. We've helped thousands of families stay in their homes, communities cut through redtape, and bureaucracy to receive the help they need and worked with State and local officials to open 97 percent of public beaches before Memorial Day, sending a strong message to the country that the shore was open for business. Through a Federal commitment to a long-term rebuilding effort, our roads, bridges, hospitals, and businesses are coming back stronger than before.

That's who we are as Americans: We take care of our own; we leave nobody behind. And as long as our fellow Americans continue to travel the long and sometimes difficult road to recovery, their country will stay with them every step of the way.

Remarks at Faneuil Hall in Boston, Massachusetts
October 30, 2013

[*Governor Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts made brief opening remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Gov. Patrick. So, Mr. President, welcome to the capital of Red Sox Nation. And welcome

also to the future of affordable, accessible health care for everybody.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

The President. Hello, Boston! It's good to be back in Boston. It's good to be back in Boston, because one of America's best Governors introduced me, Deval Patrick. Give him a big round of applause. It's good to see Congressman Bill Keating here. Give Bill a big round of applause. I want to praise somebody who's not here—I just left him—but he wears his heart on his sleeve. He loves this city so much, and it shows in what he's been doing for years now: one of America's best mayors, Tom Menino. [*Applause*] Couldn't be prouder of him.

And it's good to see all of you. I was just at the airport—Deval was kind enough to meet me, along with Mayor Menino. And Mayor Menino went back to City Hall to work so he could wrap up in time for the first pitch. I understand that. [*Laughter*] I am well aware that a Presidential visit is not the biggest thing going on today in Boston. [*Laughter*] I understand that. I tried to grow a beard, but Michelle, she wasn't having it. [*Laughter*]

I am also old enough to remember a time when the Red Sox were not in the World Series three times in 10 years. [*Laughter*] But I know the chance to win one at home for the first time since 1918 is a pretty special thing. So I promise we will be done here in time—[*laughter*]—for everybody to head over to Fenway and maybe see Big Papi blast another homer.

And maybe the other Sox will do better next year. [*Laughter*] I'm just—you know, you can hope. You can dream. [*Laughter*]

The reason I'm here, though, is because this is the hall where, 7 years ago, Democrats and Republicans came together to make health reform a reality for the people of Massachusetts. It's where then-Governor Mitt Romney, Democratic legislators, Senator Ted Kennedy, many of the folks who are here today joined forces to connect the progressive vision of health care for all with some ideas about markets and competition that had long been championed by conservatives.

And as Deval just said, it worked. It worked. Health care——

Audience members. Mr. President, reject Keystone XL. Stop climate change. For our generation, stop the pipeline! Mr. President——

The President. Okay. We're talking about health care today, but we will——

Audience members. ——reject Keystone XL. Stop climate change. Stop climate change. For our generation——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, that's okay. The—that is the wrong rally. [*Laughter*] We've got—we had the climate change rally back in the summer. [*Laughter*] This is the health care rally. [*Applause*] Now——

So health care reform in this State was a success. That doesn't mean it was perfect right away. There were early problems to solve. There were changes that had to be made. Anybody here who was involved in it can tell you that. As Deval just said, enrollment was extremely slow. Within a month, only about a hundred people had signed up—a hundred. But then 2,000 had signed up and then a few more thousand after that. And by the end of the year, 36,000 people had signed up.

And the community all came together. You even had the Red Sox help enlist people to get them covered. And pretty soon, the number of young uninsured people had plummeted. When recession struck, the financial security of health care sheltered families from deeper hardship. And today, there is nearly universal coverage in Massachusetts, and the vast majority of its citizens are happy with their coverage.

And by the way, all the parade of horribles, the worst predictions about health care reform in Massachusetts never came true. They're the same arguments that you're hearing now. Businesses didn't stop covering workers, the share of employers who offered insurance increased. People didn't get left behind, racial disparities decreased. Care didn't become unaffordable, costs tracked what was happening in other places that wasn't covering everybody.

Now, Mitt Romney and I ran a long and spirited campaign against one another, but I've always believed that when he was Governor

here in Massachusetts, he did the right thing on health care. And then Deval did the right thing by picking up the torch and working to make the law work even better. And it's because you guys had a proven model that we built the Affordable Care Act on this template of proven, bipartisan success. Your law was the model for the Nation's law.

So let's look at what's happened. Today, the Affordable Care Act requires insurance companies to abide by some of the strongest consumer protections this country has ever known: a true patient's bill of rights. No more discriminating against kids with preexisting conditions. No more dropping your policy when you get sick and need it most. No more lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits. Most plans now have to cover free preventive care like mammograms and birth control. Young people can stay on their parents' plans until they turn 26. All of this is in place right now. It is working right now.

Now, the last element of this began on October 1. It's when the Affordable Care Act created a new marketplace for quality, private insurance plans for the 15 percent or so of Americans who don't have health care and for the 5 percent of Americans who have to buy it on their own and they're not part of a group, which means they don't get as good a deal.

And this new marketplace was built on the Massachusetts model. It allows these Americans who have been locked out to get a better deal from insurers; they're pooling their purchasing power as one big group. And insurers want their business, which means they give them a better deal, and they compete for that business. And as a result, insurers in the marketplace, they can't use your medical history to charge you more. If you've been sick, you finally have the same chance to buy quality, affordable health care as everybody else.

A lot of people will qualify for new tax credits under this law that will bring down costs even further, so that if you lose your job or you start a new business or you're self-employed or you're a young person trying several jobs until you find that one that sticks, you're going to be able to be insured: insurance that goes with you and gives you freedom to pursue whatever you want, without fear that accident or illness will derail your dreams.

Now, this marketplace is open now. Insurance companies are competing for that business. The deal is good; the prices are low. But let's face it, we've had a problem. The website hasn't worked the way it's supposed to over these last couple of weeks. And as a consequence, a lot of people haven't had a chance to see just how good the prices for quality health insurance through these marketplaces really are.

Now, ultimately, this website, healthcare.gov, will be the easiest way to shop for and buy these new plans, because you can see all these plans right next to each other and compare prices and see what kind of coverage it provides. But look, it's—there's no denying it, right now, the website is too slow, too many people have gotten stuck. And I am not happy about it. And neither are a lot of Americans who need health care, and they're trying to figure out how they can sign up as quickly as possible. So there's no excuse for it. And I take full responsibility for making sure it gets fixed ASAP. We are working overtime to improve it every day. Every day.

And more people are successfully buying these new plans online than they were a couple of weeks ago, and I expect more people will be able to buy conveniently online every single day as we move forward. We're going to get these problems resolved.

Now, in the meantime, you can still apply for coverage over the phone or by mail or in person, because those plans are waiting and you're still able to get the kind of affordable, reliable health insurance that's been out of reach for too many people for too long.

So I am old enough to remember when there was not such a thing as a website. [*Laughter*] I know that's shocking to people. [*Laughter*] But the point is, I'm confident these marketplaces will work, because Massachusetts has shown that the model works, and we know what's being offered by these insurers. [*Applause*] We know it's going to work.

And so far, choice and competition in the new national marketplaces have helped keep costs lower than even we projected. In fact, nearly half of all single, uninsured 18-to-34-year-olds may be able to buy insurance for 50 bucks a month or less. Less than your cell phone bill, less than your cable bill. And one study shows that nearly 6 in 10 uninsured Americans may find coverage for a hundred bucks a month or less, even if they're older than 34.

And frankly, if every Governor was working as hard as Deval—or Governor O'Malley in Maryland or Governor Cuomo in New York—to make this law work for their citizens, as opposed to thinking politically, about 8 in 10 Americans would be getting health insurance for less than a hundred bucks a month.

And by the way, it's not just in Massachusetts. Look at Kentucky. Governor Steve Beshear, who's a Democrat, is like a man possessed with helping more people get covered. He thinks it's the right thing to do. Keep in mind, I did not win in Kentucky. [*Laughter*] But there are a lot of uninsured people in Kentucky, and they're signing up.

Oregon has covered 10 percent of its uninsured citizens already because of the Affordable Care Act. Ten percent of the uninsured have already gotten coverage. Arkansas—I didn't win that State either—[*laughter*]—has covered almost 14 percent of its uninsured already. That's already happened. And that—you've got some Republican Governors, like Governor Kasich of Ohio, who've put politics aside, and they're expanding Medicaid through this law to cover millions of people.

Now, unfortunately, there are others that are so locked in to the politics of this thing that they won't lift a finger to help their own people, and that's leaving millions of Americans uninsured unnecessarily. That's a shame. Because if they put as much energy into making this law work as they do in attacking the law, Americans would be better off. [*Applause*] Americans would be better off.

So that's the Affordable Care Act: better protections for Americans with insurance; a new marketplace for Americans without insurance; new tax credits to help folks afford it; more choice, more competition; real health care security not just for the uninsured or underinsured, but for all of us, because we pay more in premiums and taxes when Americans without good insurance visit the emergency room. We get taxed.

And since we all benefit, there are parts of this law that also require everybody to contribute, that require everybody to take some measure of responsibility. So to help pay for the law, the wealthiest Americans—families who make more than $250,000 a year—they've got to pay a little bit more. The most expensive employer health insurance plans no longer qualify for unlimited tax breaks. Some folks aren't happy about that, but it's the right thing to do.

Just like in Massachusetts, most people who can afford health insurance have to take responsibility to buy health insurance or pay a penalty. And employers with more than 50 employees are required to either provide health insurance to their workers or pay a penalty, again, because they shouldn't just dump off those costs onto the rest of us. Everybody has got some responsibilities.

Now, it is also true that some Americans who have health insurance plans that they bought on their own through the old individual market are getting notices from their insurance companies suggesting that somehow because of the Affordable Care Act, they may be losing their existing health insurance plans. This has been the latest flurry in the news. There—because there's been a lot of confusion and misinformation about this, I want to explain just what's going on.

One of the things health reform was designed to do was to help not only the uninsured, but also the underinsured. And there are a number of Americans—fewer than 5 percent of Americans—who've got cut-rate plans that don't offer real financial protection in the event of a serious illness or an accident. Remember, before the Affordable Care Act, these bad-apple insurers had free rein every single year to limit the care that you received or use minor preexisting conditions to jack up

your premiums or bill you into bankruptcy. So a lot of people thought they were buying coverage, and it turned out not to be so good.

Before the Affordable Care Act, the worst of these plans routinely dropped thousands of Americans every single year. And on average, premiums for folks who stayed in their plans for more than a year shot up about 15 percent a year. This wasn't just bad for those folks who were—who had these policies, it was bad for all of us, because, again, when tragedy strikes and folks can't pay their medical bills, everybody else picks up the tab.

Now, if you had one of these substandard plans before the Affordable Care Act became law and you really liked that plan, you were able to keep it. That's what I said when I was running for office. That was part of the promise we made. But ever since the law was passed, if insurers decided to downgrade or cancel these substandard plans, what we said under the law is, you've got to replace them with quality, comprehensive coverage, because that, too, was a central premise of the Affordable Care Act from the very beginning.

And today, that promise means that every plan in the marketplace covers a core set of minimum benefits, like maternity care and preventive care and mental health care and prescription drug benefits and hospitalization. And they can't use allergies or pregnancy or a sports injury or the fact that you're a woman to charge you more. They can't do that anymore. [*Applause*] They can't do that anymore.

If you couldn't afford coverage because your child had asthma, well, he's now covered. If you're one of the 45 million Americans with a mental illness, you're now covered. If you're a young couple expecting a baby, you're covered. You're safer. The system is more secure for you, and it's more secure for everybody.

So if you're getting one of these letters, just shop around in the new marketplace. That's what it's for. Because of the tax credits we're offering——

Audience member. Mr. President——

The President. ——and the competition——

Audience member. ——reject the Keystone Pipeline! For our generation—[*inaudible*]—and the students.

The President. The—because of the tax credits that we're offering and the competition between insurers, most people are going to be able to get better, comprehensive health care plans for the same price or even cheaper than projected. You're going to get a better deal.

Now, there's a fraction of Americans with higher incomes who will pay more on the front end for better insurance with better benefits and protections like the patient's bill of rights. And that will actually save them from financial ruin if they get sick. But nobody is losing their right to health care coverage. And no insurance company will ever be able to deny you coverage or drop you as a customer altogether. Those days are over. And that's the truth. [*Applause*] That is the truth.

So for people without health insurance, they're finally going to be able to get it. For the vast majority of people who have health insurance that works, you can keep it. For the fewer than 5 percent of Americans who buy insurance on your own, you will be getting a better deal.

So anyone peddling the notion that insurers are canceling people's plan without mentioning that almost all the insurers are encouraging people to join better plans with the same carrier and stronger benefits and stronger protections, while others will be able to get better plans with new carriers through the marketplace, and then, many will get new help to pay for these better plans and make them actually cheaper—if you leave that stuff out, you're being grossly misleading, to say the least.

But frankly, look, you saw this in Massachusetts—this is one of the challenges of health care form—health care is complicated, and it's very personal, and it's easy to scare folks. And it's no surprise that some of the same folks trying to scare people now are the same folks who've been trying to sink the Affordable Care Act from the beginning. And frankly, I don't understand it. Providing people with health care, that should be a no-brainer. Giving

people a chance to get health care should be a no-brainer.

And I've said before, if folks had actually good ideas—better ideas than what's happening in Massachusetts or what we've proposed for providing people with health insurance—I'd be happy to listen. But that's not what's happening. And anyone defending the remnants of the old, broken system as if it was working for people, anybody who thinks we shouldn't finish the job of making the health care system work for everybody—especially when these folks offer no plan for the uninsured or the underinsured or folks who lose their insurance each year—those folks should have to explain themselves.

Because I don't think we should go back to discriminating against kids with preexisting conditions. I don't think we should go back to dropping coverage for people when they get sick or because they make a mistake on their application. I don't think we should go back to the daily cruelties and indignancies—indignities and constant insecurity of a broken health care system. And I'm confident most Americans agree with me.

So yes, this is hard, because the health care system is a big system, and it's complicated. And if it was hard doing it just in one State, it's harder to do it in all 50 States, especially when the Governors of a bunch of States and half of the Congress aren't trying to help. Yes, it's hard. But it's worth it. It is the right thing to do, and we're going to keep moving forward. We are going to keep working to improve the law, just like you did here in Massachusetts.

We are just going to keep on working at it. We're going to grind it out, just like you did here in Massachusetts, and by the way, just like we did when the prescription drug program for seniors known as Medicare Part D was passed by a Republican President a decade ago. That health care law had some early challenges as well. There were even problems with the website. [*Laughter*] And Democrats weren't happy with a lot of the aspects of the law because, in part, it added hundreds of billions of dollars to the deficit; it wasn't paid for, unlike the Affordable Care Act, which will actually help lower the deficit.

Now—but you know what, once it was the law, everybody pitched in to try to make it work. Democrats weren't about to punish millions of seniors just to try to make a point or settle a score. So Democrats worked with Republicans to make it work. And I'm proud of Democrats for having done that. It was the right thing to do. Because now about 90 percent of seniors like what they have. They've gotten a better deal.

Both parties working together to get the job done, that's what we need in Washington right now. [*Applause*] That's what we need in Washington right now.

You know, if Republicans in Congress were as eager to help Americans get covered as some Republican Governors have shown themselves to be, we'd make a lot of progress. I'm not asking them to agree with me on everything, but if they'd work with us like Mitt Romney did, working with Democrats in Massachusetts—or like Ted Kennedy often did with Republicans in Congress, including on the prescription drug bill—we'd be a lot further along.

So the point is, we may have political disagreements; we do, deep ones. In some cases, we've got fundamentally different visions about where we should take the country. But the people who elect us to serve, they shouldn't pay the price for those disagreements. Most Americans don't see things through a political lens or an ideological lens. This debate has never been about right or left. It's been about the helplessness that a parent feels when she can't cover a sick child or the impossible choices a small business faces between covering his employees or keeping his doors open.

I want to give you just—I want to close with an example. So a person named Alan Schaeffer, Prattsburgh, New York, and he's got a story to tell about sacrifice, about giving up his own health care to save the woman he loves. So Alan wrote to me last week, and he told me his story.

Four years ago, his wife Jan, who happens to be a nurse, was struck with cancer, and she had

to stop working. And then, halfway through her chemo, her employer dropped coverage for both of them. And Alan is self-employed; he's got an antique business. So he had to make sure his wife had coverage, obviously, in the middle of cancer treatments, so he went without insurance.

Now, the great news is, today, Jan is cancer-free. She's on Medicare, but Alan's been uninsured ever since. Until last week, when he sat down at a computer and—I'm sure after multiple tries—[*laughter*]—signed up for a new plan under the Affordable Care Act, coverage that can never be taken away if he gets sick.

So I just want to read you what he said in this letter. He says, "I've got to tell you, I've never been so happy to pay a bill in my entire life." [*Laughter*] "When you don't have insurance at my age, [it can] really feel like a time bomb waiting to go off. The sense of relief from knowing I can live out my days longer and healthier, that's just a tremendous weight off my shoulders."

So, 2 days later, Alan goes over to his buddy Bill's house. He sits Bill down, and his wife Diana, at their computer. And after several tries—[*laughter*]—Alan helped lift that weight from their shoulders by helping them to sign up for a new plan also. And compared to their current plan, it costs less than half as much and covers more.

See, that's why we committed ourselves to this cause: for Alan and Jan; for Bill, Diana.

Audience member. Annie.

The President. For Annie. For anyone who wrote letters and shared stories and knocked on doors because they believed, what could happen here in Massachusetts could happen all across the country. And for them and for you, we are going to see this through. [*Applause*] We're going to see this through. We are going to see this through.

This hall is home to some of the earliest debates over the nature of our Government, the appropriate size, the appropriate role of our Government. And those debates continue today, and that's healthy. They're debates about the role of the individual and society and our rugged individualism and our sense of self-reliance, our devotion to the kind of freedoms whose first shot rang out not far from here. But they are also debates tempered by a recognition that we're all in this together; and that when hardship strikes—and it could strike any of us at any moment—we're there for one another; and that as a country, we can accomplish great things that we can't accomplish alone. We believe that. [*Applause*] We believe that.

And those sentiments are expressed in a painting right here in this very hall: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." That's the value statement Deval was talking about. That's what health care reform is about. That's what America is about. We are in this together, and we are going to see it through.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to David A. "Big Papi" Ortiz, first baseman, Major League Baseball's Boston Red Sox; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and former President George W. Bush. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Patrick.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Weston, Massachusetts
October 30, 2013

Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Well, first of all, that was an astonishingly succinct introduction by Al. [*Laughter*] And let me just say, Al and Susan have been such extraordinary friends to so many of us for so long, and that alone would make me grateful. But the service that they rendered as our representatives in one of our most

important allies has been extraordinary. And we're glad to have them back, but we're also grateful for the great job that they did while they were there. You made us proud. So thank you very much.

Governor Deval Patrick is who I want to be when I grow up—[*laughter*]—love that man. And he is just doing such an extraordinary job. So we're very proud of him.

We have several other folks here. Steve Israel, who is a great Congressman, has taken on the thankless task of traveling all across the country to make sure that we're recruiting some of the best candidates ever for the House of Representatives. Please give Steve Israel a big round of applause.

Your own Congressman, John Tierney, is here. Where's John? Doing a great job; very proud of him. You've got an interloper from Rhode Island, but it's close enough. He's a good friend: David Cicilline, outstanding Member of Congress, former mayor. And someone who is looking slim and cheerful and good humored, has a glow in his cheeks—[*laughter*]—this is what, I guess, getting out of Congress looks like—[*laughter*]—Barney Frank is in the house.

And finally, the person we're actually here for, to some extent, somebody who is now in the Women's Hall of Fame, somebody who has just constantly surprised me by just how good, how tough, how visionary, and how committed she is and dedicated to the well-being of not just her own constituents, but the American people, our former Speaker and, hopefully, soon-to-be Speaker once again, Nancy Pelosi.

Now, in these settings, especially with folks who have been friends for a while—I know many of you supported my campaigns; many of you, we've fought together on critical issues—I don't want to spend too much time on speeches. I want to have a conversation, so I'll save most of the time for questions. I do have to get out of here in time so as not to delay the Red Sox game, because if I do, I might never be able to come to Massachusetts again. [*Laughter*] So we're on a fairly tight schedule.

This has been a challenging year. Since my reelection, we started with the heartbreaking tragedy of Newtown, which I've said before continues to be probably the toughest day of my Presidency. Then we had the bombing in Boston, which was handled with such grace by Deval and Mayor Menino and all the people of this incredible city. And we would have hoped that coming out of those two tragedies that we would see a new spirit in Congress of people pulling together and rolling up sleeves and working on at least the things that a broad spectrum of Americans agree on.

But that's not what we got. Instead, we had more obstruction and more resistance to getting anything done, most recently culminating in a shutdown that was entirely unnecessary and that hurt our economy, punished Federal workers, who are out there every day trying to help veterans and trying to make sure that our air is clean and our water is clean and trying to help small businesses.

And so I think it's fair to say that, however low people's estimations of Washington were before the shutdown, they're lower now. And it may be that the other side is comfortable with that because their operating theory has been that government is the problem and the Federal Government, in particular, is a problem, and that we don't need dedicated people in public service and we don't need collective action around the challenges that we face.

But the American people know better, and we know better. We know that we are entering into an extraordinarily promising, but also challenging time in this country. International competition is fierce. We have an economy that's never been more productive or more innovative. But what we've also seen is an economy that produces a winner-take-all situation and folks like those in this room, who are doing very well. There are a whole bunch of folks out there who are struggling. You've got a middle class that is anxious about whether their children will be able to replicate their success. There are questions as to whether, if you work hard in this country, you can still make it.

We've got enormous challenges like climate change that transcend borders. And although, because of our extraordinary military and the men and women in uniform, we don't have any

state-to-state peer when it comes to our national security, the threats of climate change and terrorism and cybersecurity are all things that we can't manage on our own.

And so sometimes, people ask me, man, how do you stay optimistic? It just seems like there are a bunch of problems piling up on your desk, and it doesn't seem like you're getting a lot of help from the other side. And it is true that I'm much grayer than I was when I first came to Al Solomont's house. And there is this enormous frustration sometimes when you can see—Deval and I were just talking about this. We know what the punch list is of things that need to get done. We know if we invest in infrastructure, we can put people back to work and strengthen our economy. We know that if we are investing in early childhood education, then our children are going to better be able to compete. We know that there's no contradiction between a smart energy policy that boosts growth and an environmental policy that passes on a clean planet to the next generation. We know that making sure job training programs work and basic research in science will ensure that not only do we have the most innovative, dynamic economy in the world, but we're also going to have the workers who can take those jobs.

We know all these things. And so when you see it and you say to yourself, "These aren't even ideological questions, these aren't historically left-right questions, these are just commonsense questions," and you see the fact that you get so much resistance from the other side on things that they used to be for, it can be frustrating. But what keeps me optimistic is, when I get out of Washington and I travel across the country and I meet the American people, their resilience, their strength, their optimism, their stick-to-it-ness, their concern for one another continues to be evident. It makes you optimistic.

Our job is to align our politics with the goodness of the American people. And I don't think that's a partisan agenda; I don't think that's a Democratic or Republican agenda. I think that's an American agenda. But what I also know is the interests of the American people will be better served if I've got Nancy Pelosi standing by my side and we get the agenda done.

That's why you're here. I'm grateful for it. We're going to need your support not just now, but for the long haul.

Thank you very much, everybody.

I think we're going to start taking questions, but I think we're going to allow the fourth estate to get some food. [*Laughter*] I hope you guys are getting some food, at least some snacks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. at the residence of Alan D. and Susan Lewis Solomont. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. David N. Cicilline, in his former capacity as mayor of Providence, RI; Rep. Steven J. Israel, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; and former Rep. Barney Frank. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Sudan
October 30, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within the 90-day period prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the Sudan emergency is to continue in effect beyond November 3, 2013.

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Sudan that led to the declaration of a national emergency in Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997, and the expansion of that emergency in Executive Order 13400 of April 26, 2006, and with respect to which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 13412 of October 13, 2006, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Sudan and maintain in force the sanctions against Sudan to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 30, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the SelectUSA 2013 Investment Summit
October 31, 2013

Thank you. Well, please have a seat.

To my great friend Penny Pritzker, thank you for the kind words, but more importantly, thank you for your outstanding leadership, for bringing us all together today, and being such a strong voice for America's workers and America's businesses.

I want to acknowledge Acting Deputy Secretary Patrick Gallagher, Under Secretary Francisco Sanchez, and Vinai Thummalapally and their team at SelectUSA. And I want to especially thank all of you, State and local officials from across the country, and business leaders from around the world.

As President, I have gone all over the world to go to bat for American exports and American workers. I've been to many of your countries, and I've said that when we do business together, and when we trade and forge new partnerships, it's good for all of us. I want more American products being sold in your countries and I want your companies investing more here in the United States of America because it advances my top priority as President: creating good-paying American jobs and strengthening and broadening our middle class. There's nothing more important right now.

And I'm here because I want your companies to know—I want companies around the world to know—that I believe there is no better place in the world to do business than the United States of America. Think about it: Globalization and technology means you can go just about anywhere. But there are a whole lot of reasons you ought to come here.

We're not just the world's largest market, we're growing. Thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, we've cleared away the rubble from the financial crisis, and over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created more than 7½ million new jobs. Thanks to tough decisions we've made to tackle our long-term challenges, America is becoming more competitive from a business standpoint. We're reforming a broken health care system, and as a consequence, health care costs are rising at their slowest rate in 50 years. We've cut our deficits by more than half since I took office, and they keep going down. We've pursued an all-of-the-above energy strategy, and we are producing more traditional energy, more renewable energy than ever before, more natural gas than anyone in the world, and we have cut our carbon pollution in the process.

So while the case for doing business in America has always been strong, we've made it stronger. And of course, you will find no better workers than American workers. Our productivity is rising. We have the world's best universities, its most innovative entrepreneurs. We have its strongest intellectual property protections to go along with a rule of law that matches up with anyone. And thanks in part to a new

initiative focused on exports and the new trade agreements that I've signed, we sell more products made in America to the rest of the world than ever before.

So as you've heard repeatedly today and you will hear undoubtedly after I leave this stage, America is open for business. And businesses have responded. After a decade in which many jobs left the United States to go overseas, now we're seeing companies starting to bring jobs back because they're seeing the advantages of being located here. Caterpillar is bringing jobs back from Japan. Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. After locating plants in other countries like China, Intel is opening its most advanced plant right here in the United States.

And there are a whole range of factors involved. People are looking at lower energy costs here. They're looking at stability. They're looking at the increased productivity of our workers. All these things are adding up. And people are saying, why would we want to be outside the world's largest market when we can get our products made effectively here and this is a great platform from which we can export all around the world?

And it's not just companies based in the United States. Honda is betting on America by expanding production operations in Ohio, in Alabama, and Indiana. And today, more Hondas are made in America than anyplace else in the world. Samsung is betting on America by revamping their plant in Austin, Texas, a $4 billion investment. Siemens is betting on America by hiring hundreds of new workers in North Carolina and putting $50 million a year into training its U.S workforce.

And that's the kind of investment we've always welcomed as a nation, but the reason for SelectUSA is we know we can do more. We know we can be better. So, 2 years ago, I acted on a recommendation from the CEOs on my Jobs Council, and we created SelectUSA to encourage more foreign companies to invest and create jobs right here in the United States. And we've shown that this works.

As Penny mentioned earlier this morning, with help from SelectUSA, the Austrian company Voestalpine is creating 220 jobs at an auto parts plant in Cartersville, Georgia. The Canadian company Bombardier is investing more than 600 million to expand its Learjet facility in Wichita, Kansas. ASCO, a Belgian company that makes high-tech aircraft parts, reopened a shuttered factory in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and they're expected to create 380 good jobs by the end of 2015. And the list goes on.

And I want to see even more of these success stories told across this country, which means I want to make sure we are doing everything we can so that companies like yours want to set up shop here in the United States. And for all the U.S. States and cities who are represented here today, we want to provide you with the tools you need to close those deals and create those jobs.

So that's why today I'm proud to announce that I'm expanding and enhancing SelectUSA to create the first-ever fully coordinated U.S. Government effort to recruit businesses to invest and create new jobs in the United States. To do that, I'm taking four new steps to bring more good jobs to our shores.

First, building on the great work that our diplomats and Embassies do every day, I'm making attracting foreign investment a formal part of the portfolio for our Ambassadors and their teams around the world. Now, I meet with our dedicated Embassy staffs wherever I go. All of them are great ambassadors for America, and they're building bridges and connections every day. Well, I want them doing even more to help foreign companies cross those bridges and come here. And as they take on this expanded economic mission overseas, we'll make sure that they've got the support that they need here at home.

Which brings me to the second point: Officials at the highest levels, up to and including me, are going to do even more to make the case for investing in America. Now, I already do this everywhere I go around the world, in public and private. I joked with a few American companies that I will deserve at least a gold watch at the end of my tenure from them. [*Laughter*] I've racked up some pretty good sales. But as a country, we don't always make our case in a coordinated way that links our

teams overseas to the right senior officials in Washington. And we're going to change that, make our advocacy more efficient, more effective, and more connected so that businesses who are making decisions about where to invest are getting timely answers and know that they're going to have all the help that they need.

Number three, we'll make sure that for the first times, companies who want to do business in America have a single point of contact at the Federal level to cut through redtape. So we're going to help you navigate national, State, local rules and regulations so that you can invest faster, open facilities faster, create jobs faster.

And finally, we'll help States, cities, regions across America up their game by giving them more tools they need to compete, from the latest research and analysis to events that link them directly with potential investors. This is a big country, and for a lot of foreign investors, it may be sometimes hard to navigate and figure out what exactly is going to fit the needs of your company. Well, we can help you do that, and we can help make sure that State and local governments and regional offices, they're best equipped to make their case, and we can get a good fit that's good for the company and good for those communities.

So a new focus at our Embassies on attracting investment, more outreach from Washington, coordinated advocacy to bring more jobs here, new ways to cut through redtape, and new tools for State and local leaders—that's what an expanded SelectUSA will mean for businesses and for our partners in U.S. States and cities. And ultimately, I believe that will translate into more good middle class jobs for America, my number-one priority.

I will be asking Congress to do its part. A lot of this is coordination. It's not necessary to spend a lot of money, it's important for us to do what we do more wisely. But making America even more attractive to investment should be something that everybody can agree on, Democrats and Republicans. And we've got to work together to get that done.

At the macro level, that means getting beyond gridlock and some of the manufactured crises that we've seen come out of Washington, because I assume if you ask any CEO here if shutting down the Government makes them more confident about wanting to bring jobs to America, the answer will probably be no. The notion of not paying our bills on time doesn't inspire confidence. So it's time for Congress to focus on what the American people are focused on and what I'm focused on, which is creating good jobs that pay good wages and creating a good environment for investment.

We do need to fully fund the SelectUSA program so that more middle class folks have a chance to earn a decent living. We need to make sure that we are resourcing the efforts to make sure that our workers can earn the skills that they need to compete in the global economy. We've got—one of the crown jewels of our education system is our community college system. Not everybody is going to be training at MIT or Stanford, but these community colleges means that we can partner with businesses, help defray some of the training costs, help design with businesses what exactly they're going to need in terms of people getting hired. And we've got the resources to do it. We know how to do it. But we've got to make sure Congress is supportive of that.

We've got to fix a broken immigration system so that we are welcoming more talented workers and entrepreneurs from around the world, and so if companies are coming here to locate and they've got a key individual that they need to bring over to make sure that the company is doing what it needs to do, that it's not a tangle of redtape. And the good news is, we know we've got bipartisan support for immigration reform, we just have to make sure we get it done this year.

We've got to continue to make smart investments in research and development, education, infrastructure, all the things that historically have made America the most attractive place on the planet for businesses to invest. We've got to build on that success. That's who we are as a country. And we have a tradition here of tackling new challenges, adapting to new circumstances, seizing new opportunities. And that's one of the reasons that history

shows over the last two centuries that when you bet on America, that bet pays off.

So to all the business leaders here today and around the world: We want to be your partner in helping to write the next chapter in our history. We want you to join the generations of immigrants and entrepreneurs and foreign investors who have discovered exactly what it means when we say we are the land of opportunity. That is not a myth, it's a proven fact.

There are a lot of wonderful countries out there. But this is a place where you can do business, create great products, deliver great services, make money, and do good at the same time. So you should find out why there's no substitute for those proud words: Made in America. And here's three more words: Select the U.S.A. When you do, you'll find some of the world's best workers, some of the world's most innovative entrepreneurs. You'll find a government and a President who is committed to helping you create more good jobs for the middle class and helping you succeed well into the 21st century.

We are open for business, and we're looking forward to partnering with all of you in the months and years ahead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Vinai K. Thummalapally, Executive Director, SelectUSA initiative at the International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq and an Exchange With Reporters

November 1, 2013

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome back Prime Minister Maliki to the White House. It's been 2 years since the last U.S. troops left from Iraq, but the strategic partnership between our two countries remains very strong.

We honor the lives that were lost, both American and Iraqi, to bring about a functioning democracy in a country that previously had been ruled by a vicious dictator. And we appreciate Prime Minister Maliki's commitment to honoring that sacrifice by ensuring a strong, prosperous, inclusive, and democratic Iraq.

We had a wide-ranging discussion about economic issues, regional issues, and security issues. And much of our discussion centered on the fact that, although Iraq's made significant progress in areas like oil production and a range of other reforms that have taken place, unfortunately, Al Qaida has still been active and has grown more active recently. So we had a lot of discussion about how we can work together to push back against that terrorist organization that operates not only in Iraq, but also poses a threat to the entire region and to the United States.

I emphasized that in addition to continuing counterterrorism support and partnership, that we were encouraged by the work that Prime Minister Maliki has done in the past to ensure that all people inside of Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—feel that they have a voice in their government. And one of the most important expressions of that will be elections next year. I encouraged that Iraq pass an election law and that that moves forward so that people understand that when they have differences, they can express them politically, as opposed to through violence.

I also appreciated the efforts that Prime Minister Maliki has made recently to restore stronger relationships with its neighbors, including Kuwait and Turkey and some of the other Gulf States, and expressed my interest in providing whatever support is necessary to make sure that Iraq is working cooperatively and effectively with its neighbors.

We spent considerable amount of time talking about Syria, where the spillover effects of

the chaos and Asad's horrific treatment of his own people has had spillover effects in Iraq as well. And we agreed that it's in the interest of both countries to try to bring about a political settlement, a political transition, inside of Syria that allows the Syrian people to make decisions about their own lives, while at the same time, isolating extremist factions that could end up not only threatening people inside of Syria, but throughout the region as well.

And I shared with the Prime Minister our efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue in a peaceful way, but emphasized to him how important it is that Iran seize this opportunity to take the right path in accordance with previous international norms and resolutions. My hope is, is that we can arrive at a resolution, but I emphasized to the Prime Minister how serious we are about preventing a nuclear arms race in a region that would only add to the dangers that so many people there already face.

Throughout this discussion, the main theme was, is that the United States wants to be a strong and effective partner with Iraq and we are deeply invested in seeing an Iraq that is inclusive, that is democratic, and that is prosperous. And I communicated to the Prime Minister that anything that we can do to help bring about that more hopeful future for Iraq is something that we want to work on.

So, welcome, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you so much for coming.

Prime Minister Maliki. Thank you very much, Mr. President. In the name of God, the Merciful. Mr. President, you went into the details of all the issues that we discussed, and the dialogue was very good. So we mentioned many, many issues that are of common importance for us, and we agreed on them. It was a very positive, very deep, and very strategic dialogue.

We had an agreement that we signed between Iraq and the United States, as you know, and we have a friendship agreement, and we have a strategic framework agreement. And we need to activate them. And this was one of the main purpose of our visit. We need to enhance our bilateral relations and to enhance these agreements.

We discussed many issues that are very important for Iraq, for the region, and for the whole world. And this clearly tends to show that the strategic framework agreement is of essence for the cooperation between the United States and Iraq for the interests of all.

And in our discussions today, we wanted to take the strategic framework agreement and our bilateral relation, sort of, out from the unilateral security and military assistance that the United States provided to us. We wanted to move to a multilayer relation at the political, economic level. And we—[*inaudible*]—the United States and the United States company and economy to participate in the rebuilding and developing area.

We had a common vision about all the issues that we discussed when it comes to diagnosing the return of terrorism to the Middle East. And we talked about the way of countering terrorism, and we had similar positions and similar ideas. We discussed the details of our cooperation, but the people who are in charge will discuss further details about this. What we want is for Iraq and the region to be able to work together. And we are working in Iraq at the security level, intelligence level, social level; at all the level, we are mobilizing our people in order to fight Al Qaida, because it's a scourge for Iraq and the Middle East.

And I told the President that we improved our relation and are still working on improving our relation with all the countries in the region. And we are aiming at creating a moderation front in order to fight the sectarian front and the violence and the terrorism. And this is very important. And we, as Iraqis, will act responsibly at all the necessary levels—political, security, and military—to do so.

We do know that the democratic experience in Iraq is nascent and fragile, but it was born very strong. And we need to continue enhancing it and consolidating it, because democracy is very important. We also want to have the mechanism of democracy such as elections, and we want to hold the elections on time—and the Government is committed to do so—alongside with other issues like enhancing the national identity. Democracy needs to be

strong, and we are going to strengthen it because it only will allow us to fight terrorism.

And as the President said, we were in total agreement when it comes to finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria, a solution through dialogue. So we are very supportive of Geneva II. We want the Syrian people to have the right to self-determination and to choose its leader. And also, we want a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear problem. We do hope to avert nuclear wars in the region, and we also want to avoid chemical—the use of chemical weapons because we and the Syrians suffered a lot from these weapons.

And we will continue with our good relations, bilateral relations, and with the strategic framework agreement. We want them to be strong, and we will continue working on that.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you, guys.

Shooting at Los Angeles International Airport

Q. Mr. President, anything on the LAX shooting? Any thoughts on the LAX shooting?

The President. Obviously, we've been monitoring, and we're concerned about it. But I'll let the law enforcement folks talk about it directly.

All right? Thank you, everybody. Thank you, guys. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:03 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. Prime Minister Maliki referred to the proposed Geneva II international conference on the civil war and sectarian conflict in Syria. Prime Minister Maliki spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq

November 1, 2013

In their meeting today at the White House, President Obama and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki reaffirmed the strategic partnership between the United States and the Republic of Iraq and pledged to advance common interests to support a stable, secure, and prosperous Iraq and Middle East. They also discussed their shared commitment to enhance cooperation under the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA).

The two leaders noted that it has been nearly two years since the final American troops departed Iraq and the United States and Iraq entered a new phase of their relationship, based on mutual respect and a shared commitment to build a strategic partnership between two sovereign nations. They recalled the thousands of Americans and Iraqis who have given their lives in our common fight against terrorism and extremism in Iraq. The President and Prime Minister renewed their determination to honor the memory and sacrifice of those killed by strengthening our joint long-term strategic partnership across the fields covered by the SFA, including security, diplomacy, trade, education, energy, culture, science, and justice.

Following the President's meeting with the Prime Minister, Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Maliki convened the Higher Coordination Committee (HCC). This was the fourth meeting of the HCC since it was established in 2008 under the SFA.

Regional Integration

The U.S. and Iraqi delegations discussed Iraq's position as an emerging democracy in the region, leading energy producer, and a nation representing a diversity of social customs, religions, and ethnicities. The Iraqi delegation described the challenges Iraq faces due to its geography and the legacy of the former regime after decades of wars and international isolation. In this regard, both delegations welcomed the full restoration of relations between Iraq and Kuwait, expanding energy, security, and

commercial ties with Jordan, and improving relations with Turkey. Both delegations also welcomed ongoing exchanges of high-level visits with Turkey, as well as a strategic dialogue to be held later this month between the United States, Iraq, and other regional partners, with an emphasis on supporting moderates and isolating extremists in the region.

The Iraqi delegation noted that with seventeen Arab embassies open in Baghdad, the Government of Iraq recently renewed an invitation to other Arab countries to open an embassy as soon as possible. In this regard, the United States welcomed the participation of the Iraqi Security Forces in joint exercises with regional partners over the past six months, including the Eager Lion exercise in Jordan, and surface warfare and mine countermeasures exercise in Bahrain. The United States pledged its ongoing diplomatic coordination under the SFA in these and other areas.

Countering Al-Qaida Affiliated Groups

The two delegations shared an assessment of al Qaida affiliated groups threatening Iraq, with particular emphasis on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The Iraqi delegation confirmed a comprehensive strategy to isolate ISIL and other extremist groups through coordinated security, economic, and political measures. This strategy includes security operations coordinated with local officials, and renewed efforts to empower local security structures, such as the Sons of Iraq, to mitigate extremist infiltration. Both sides emphasized—on an urgent basis—the need for additional equipment for Iraqi forces to conduct ongoing operations in remote areas where terrorist camps are located. The Iraqi delegation stressed its desire to purchase U.S. equipment as a means of strengthening long-term institutional ties with the United States, and confirmed its commitment to ensure strict compliance with U.S. laws and regulations on the use of such equipment.

Both delegations further confirmed the need for aggressive political outreach as a means to isolate and defeat ISIL and other extremist networks. They welcomed the national charter of social peace signed last month by political and religious leaders from across Iraq. Both parties welcomed calls to reject violence and sectarian incitement, and discussed the critical role of religious leaders as a force of moderation in the region.

Both delegations also noted the recent resolution from the Iraqi Council of Representatives stating that national elections would be held no later than April 30, 2014. The Iraqi delegation confirmed its commitment to holding these elections on time. Both parties emphasized the importance of the Iraqi government's determination to hold elections on time and its support to the High Electoral Commission to ensure that the elections are well prepared. The United States offered its technical support in full coordination with the Government of Iraq and the United Nations.

Energy

The U.S. and Iraqi delegations reiterated the importance of Iraq's future energy sector development and economic growth so all Iraqis can share equitably from its resources, as well as the valuable role that Iraq plays in providing a steady flow of energy resources to global markets. In this regard, the Iraqi side presented Iraq's new five-year $357 billion development plan and their long-term vision for developing strategic infrastructure that provides energy system resilience and new commercial opportunities, with multiple oil export routes through the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, and Mediterranean. The delegations welcomed the opportunity to expand cooperation on energy, including steps to advance these projects, at the next Energy Joint Coordination Committee in early 2014.

Syria

The Iraqi delegation confirmed its support for the Geneva II process and efforts to forge a diplomatic settlement to the ongoing conflict in Syria. The United States took note of the important role Iraq can play in helping to shape conditions conducive to a peaceful political settlement. The Iraqi delegation expressed its

increasing concern about weapons coming into Iraq from Syria for use against the Iraqi people, emphasizing the need to take increasing measures to police its borders and airspace against the transit of weapons or cargo proscribed by applicable U.N. Security Council Resolutions, and called on all neighboring states to cooperate fully.

Trade

The Iraqi delegation stressed their desire to harness the U.S. private sector to advance mutual interests in Iraq and the United States. The delegations noted the signing earlier this year of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, which will help increase American exports to Iraq and provide more economic opportunities for the Iraqi people. Both delegations welcomed the steady increase in U.S. companies doing business in Iraq—including major corporations such as Citibank, Ford, General Electric, and Boeing. The Iraqi delegation expressed hope that U.S. businesses can have a prominent role in their country's rapidly developing energy, transportation, banking, and health sectors. In this regard, both delegations looked forward to mutual trade events to be held over the coming months.

Education and Exchange Programs

The Iraqi delegation discussed their vision to strengthen their nation through education and exchange programs with an emerging generation. They noted that twenty-five percent of their population—nearly 8 million Iraqis—was born after 2003, and that the Government of Iraq is determined to give this generation educational opportunities inside Iraq and abroad, including at American colleges and universities. Both delegations agreed that the best way to honor our shared sacrifice over the past decade is to provide these young Iraqis with opportunities never enjoyed by other generations. The U.S. delegation noted that under the SFA and the educational programs established through bilateral Joint Coordinating Committees, the number of Iraqi students studying in the United States has grown to nearly 1,000—and that a university fair last month in Baghdad attracted 30 U.S. universities and 2,000 Iraqi scholarship students.

Conclusion

The two delegations closed the meeting with a shared commitment to increase the numbers of Iraqis studying in the United States, in addition to strengthening other institutional ties beyond government-to-government ties, to include cultural, artistic, and scientific exchanges. Both sides again reflected on the sacrifice that has made this progress possible, while recognizing the very serious challenges that must be confronted together.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Observance of Diwali
November 1, 2013

For the Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists celebrating Diwali this weekend, the festival of lights reaffirms the things in life that matter most. Dancing, celebration, and good food remind us that life's greatest joys are the simple pleasures that come from spending time with people we love. Contemplation and prayer remind us that that people of all faiths have an obligation to perform *seva*, or service to others. And the flame of the *diya*, or lamp, reminds us that light will ultimately triumph over darkness. Here in the United States, Diwali also reminds us that our Nation is home to many faiths and traditions, and that our diversity makes us stronger, which I why I'm proud that this year Democrats and Republicans in Congress joined together for the first ever celebration of Diwali on Capitol Hill. Over the last 5 years, Michelle and I have been honored to have the chance to observe

this ancient holiday both at the White House and in India, and we wish all those celebrating this weekend a happy Diwali and *Saal Mubarak*.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request
November 1, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to my constitutional authority and as contemplated by section 446 of the District of Columbia Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act as amended in 1989, I am transmitting the District of Columbia's fiscal year (FY) 2014 Budget and Financial Plan. This transmittal does not represent an endorsement of the contents of the D.C. government's requests.

The proposed FY 2014 Budget and Financial Plan reflects the major programmatic objectives of the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia. For FY 2014, the District estimates total revenues and expenditures of $12.2 billion.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

The President's Weekly Address
November 2, 2013

Hi, everybody. On Thursday, I addressed a conference for business leaders from around the world. And my pitch was simple: Choose America, invest in America, create jobs in America. It speaks to my top priority as President: growing our economy, creating good jobs, strengthening security and opportunity for the middle class.

Over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created over 7½ million new jobs. And this week, the Treasury confirmed that since I took office, we've cut our deficits by more than half. But we have more work to do. We need to grow and create more good jobs faster. That's my driving focus. And I'll go anywhere and do anything to make it happen.

That has to be Washington's driving focus as well. But I know that what you often hear out of Washington can sound like Charlie Brown's teacher: a jumble of unfocused noise that's out of touch with the things you care about. So today I want to cut through that noise and talk plainly about what we should do right now to keep growing this economy and creating new jobs.

It begins by ending what has done more than anything else to undermine our economy over the past few years, and that's the constant cycle of manufactured crises and self-inflicted wounds. I was glad to hear the Republican leader in the Senate say this week that they won't pursue another Government shutdown or threaten another default on our debt. Because we shouldn't be injuring ourselves every few months, we should be investing in ourselves.

And one way to do that is through the budget that Congress started working on this week. Now, budgets can be a boring topic, especially on the weekend. But they can also be revealing because they expose what our priorities are as a country for everybody to see.

Think about it. We can keep wasteful corporate tax giveaways that working folks don't get, or we could close those loopholes and use that money to pay for things that actually create jobs. We can keep harmful cuts to education programs or we could give more kids a Head Start, hire more teachers in math and science and help more kids afford a college education. We can keep doling out corporate welfare to

big oil companies or we could keep investing in the renewable energy that creates jobs and lowers our carbon pollution.

Priorities. Choices. That's what this is about. And the stakes for the middle class couldn't be higher. If we don't pick the right priorities now, make the right choices now, we could hinder growth and opportunity for decades and leave our children with something less.

That includes the obsession with cutting just for the sake of cutting. That hasn't helped our economy grow, it's held it back.

Remember, our deficits are getting smaller, not bigger. On my watch, they're falling at the fastest pace in 60 years. So that gives us room to fix our long-term debt problems without sticking it to young people or undermining our bedrock retirement and health security programs or ending basic research that helps us grow.

Here's the bottom line. Congress should pass a budget that cuts things we don't need and closes wasteful tax loopholes that don't help create jobs so that we can free up resources for the things that actually do create jobs and growth.

Building new roads and bridges and schools and airports, that creates jobs. Educating our kids and our workers for a global economy, that helps us grow. Investing in science and technology, research that keeps our businesses and our military on the cutting edge, that's vital for our economic future.

So the question isn't between growth and fiscal responsibility. We need both. The question can't be how much more we can cut, it's got to be how many more jobs we can create, how many more kids we can educate, and how much more shared prosperity we can generate.

Because in America, our economy doesn't grow from the top down. It grows from the middle class out. And as long as I am President, our national mission will remain building an America where everyone belongs and everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on November 1 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on November 2. In the address, the President referred to Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 2.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate Terence R. McAuliffe in Arlington, Virginia

November 3, 2013

The President. Terry McAuliffe. Hey! Hello, Washington-Lee! Hello, Virginia! How are you doing? Are you fired up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you ready to vote on Tuesday?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Well, it is good to be back in Virginia with the next Governor of the great Commonwealth of Virginia, Terry McAuliffe.

Now, let me just say, before I start saying nice things about Terry—[*laughter*]—that, like me, he married up. [*Laughter*] Those of you who have had a chance to meet Dorothy know that Terry clearly was very persistent, but whatever he did, it worked. And as a consequence, they've got unbelievable children who are doing outstanding things on their own and are also on the campaign trail. So please give it up for the family because they make some big sacrifices. And Dorothy is going to be a great First Lady of the Commonwealth.

I want to thank Terry for the introduction. Over the last few weeks, a lot of people have been coming out and campaigning for Terry, and I was tired of having other people have all the fun—[*laughter*]—Bill Clinton and Kerry Washington and all these folks. And I thought,

I want to get in on the action. And so did Joe Biden, who I understand is going to be out here tomorrow doing some campaigning.

Mr. McAuliffe. Yes.

The President. But we've also got some folks here who are doing outstanding work in their own right, and I want to acknowledge them. They're fighting every single day for you. First of all, your wonderful Senator and former Governor, Mark Warner. Three outstanding Members of Congress who are fighting for you every single day: Gerry Connolly, Jim Moran, Bobby Scott. Your next Lieutenant Governor, Ralph Northam. And your next attorney general, Mark Herring in the house.

So you've got an all-star team here. There are no weak links. Everybody is ready to work on behalf of Virginia. But obviously, at the top of the ticket is this man. And so let me just say a few things about Terry.

First of all, I think it's clear that he's not shy. [*Laughter*] This is a man who knows how to work, and he knows how to push through obstacles. And he cares deeply about the opportunities that this country has given him, and he wants to make sure that those opportunities are there for everybody, not just for a few. He knows what it's like to work hard and struggle to get ahead.

You may know that Terry started his own business when he was 14. He started 42 all together [He's been in business 42 years all together],* but the first one was when he was 14, paving driveways to help pay for college. And he's brought that same grit and that same determination to everything he's done, from public service to business, to being a husband and a father to the extraordinary children of the McAuliffe family.

So he knows what it's like to work hard. And when it comes to creating good jobs, when it comes to investing in education, when it comes to giving more Virginians the opportunities that they deserve, Terry understands what folks are going through. He knows how to get things done. And that's why I hope you guys are fired up on Tuesday, because we cannot have people stay at home when so much is at stake. I hope you're ready to fight for Terry, because he's ready to fight for you for the next 4 years.

And this election is going to say a lot about Virginia's future and about the country's future. It's only been a few years since we went through a punishing recession. Jobs were lost. Too many people lost their homes, their security, their savings, including a lot of folks here in Virginia. Now, thanks to some tough decisions that we made, we're in a much different place. Over the past 3½ years, we've created more than 7½ million new jobs. Our deficits have been cut by more than half since I came into office. Health care costs are slowing. The housing market is rebounding. The American auto industry is back on the move.

So we've made progress, but what Terry understands, what everybody on this ticket understands, is that there's still too many folks out there who are hurting, too many families who are struggling, too many people who are in the middle class that worry that maybe the life chances of their children won't be as good as theirs, and too many folks not yet in the middle class who no matter how hard they work don't feel like those ladders of opportunity are still there for them.

And that's what this election is about. That's what the great political contest in this country is all about. Are we going to put in place policies that make sure that anybody in this country, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter who you love, that people can make it if they try here in the United States of America? And are we going to give each other the support that people need to succeed? That's what's at stake.

So that's been my priority as President: to grow the economy, to create good jobs, to have broad-based prosperity. Because America has always succeeded when everybody succeeds. That's good for folks at the top and good for folks at the bottom. When everybody has the opportunity to get a good job if they're willing to work hard, that's good for businesses be-

* White House correction.

cause now they've got more customers. Everybody does well when our growth is from the middle out and from the bottom up, not just from the top down.

And Terry understands that. That's what I focus on every day. That's what Terry will focus on when he's Governor.

Now, as has been pointed out, unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the focus of too many folks on the other side of the aisle. You know, no party has a monopoly on wisdom. And I'm a Democrat, and I'm proud to be a Democrat, but historically, in our two-party system, there's always been the capacity for folks on both sides of the aisle to work and find compromise on issues like the environment or issues like building roads and educating our workforce and funding basic research. There's been a broad consensus that these are things that are important for America to do.

But lately, instead of rolling up their sleeves and working on the things that we can agree on together, you've seen an extreme faction of the Republican Party that has shown again and again and again that they're willing to highjack the entire party—and the country and the economy—and grind progress to an absolute halt if they don't get a hundred percent of what they want.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Now, this isn't just speculation. We just saw it last month. Here in Virginia, you felt the pain of the first Government shutdown in 17 years. And there aren't a lot of States that felt more of the pain than folks right here in Virginia. Paychecks were delayed. Families were forced to go without the services that they depended on. Business owners took it on the chin when customers cut back on their own spending.

And as Terry mentioned, his opponent says he's perfectly happy with it. Now he says it's in the rearview mirror. Well, it can't be in the rearview mirror if this is your operative theory of politics. If you embrace the very politics that led to this shutdown, then I guarantee you, it's not in the rearview mirror of voters in Virginia. They remember. They understand that that is not how you govern and that is not how you move America forward.

This isn't a game. And there are very real consequences when you operate ideologically, the way some of these folks do. There are practical consequences when you operate this way. And Terry understands that. During the shutdown, he called on Speaker Boehner to stand up to the Tea Party, reopen the Government so Virginians could go back to work. He stood up for you. Instead of joining him, Terry's opponent sided with the people who would rather hurt folks to make a point. Rather than back down, Terry's opponent doubled down.

Well, Virginia, look, I know sometimes folks in Congress can get away with acting irresponsibly, acting like compromise is a bad word. Maybe it's good for their political prospects; maybe it's good for their political district. But you cannot afford to have a Governor who's thinking the same way. The Governor is—that's a practical job. That's about making sure schools are funded. That's about making sure that roads are built. That's about making sure that research is funded, that universities are operating at full capacity. That's what a Governor does. They can't afford to be ideologues. They've got to be able to work with everybody and compromise and get the job done. And that's who Terry McAuliffe is, and that's why you've got to vote for him on Tuesday.

When hard-working families come looking for some support, when communities come looking for a way to create new jobs in their area, when folks are looking for some job training that can actually get them into that new industry that is growing here in Virginia, they're looking to the Governor. And the Governor can't be waving around a whole bunch of theories that have nothing to do with people's ordinary lives. It's got to be somebody who is there and understands them, is willing to work for them.

That's what Mark Warner did. That's what Tim Kaine did. And that's what Terry McAuliffe will do. He is part of that legacy.

And by the way, that's why you've got so many Republican business men and women, Republican mayors and State legislators, many

of whom never supported a Democrat before, who are stepping up in this race and saying, Terry McAuliffe is the right man for the job. They understand that the job of Governor is not tearing stuff down, it is building folks up, building communities up, moving forward, bringing people together. And they know that Terry can do that.

So we—this is all about moving forward. It's not about going backwards. It's about building, not destroying. And, Virginia, I'm asking you to choose progress. Because the truth is, what's holding us back right now is not a lack of good ideas. I've got to tell you, I spend a lot of time on policy, and I'm in a lot of meetings, and there are some very tough problems that the world faces and that the country faces, but so much of what needs to be done for us to make progress is right there. Everybody knows what it is. Everybody understands what we need.

For example, here in Virginia, if we invest in our roads and our bridges, if all across the country we invest in our ports and our infrastructure, we can put more people back to work right now. We can strengthen our economy in the long term. That is not a Republican or a Democratic idea, that's just common sense. We've done it in the past; we can do it again. And Terry has got a plan to make it happen right here in Virginia.

We know—the research has been done—if we invest in early childhood education and every young person, when they go to school, they are already ready to learn and they're getting the support that they need, that you see drastic improvement and that those young people become productive citizens. We know that. Terry understands it. That's not Democrat or Republican, that's common sense. Let's make those investments.

We know that if we make sure that college is affordable for young people, those States that educate their workforce, they're going to attract more companies, more businesses. We know that. It's not a Democratic or Republican idea, that's common sense. Terry understands that.

We know that there's no contradiction between a smart energy policy that makes sure that we're not only investing in energy sources of the past, but also energy sources of the future; that we're caring for our environment and we're thinking about what kind of legacy we're leaving to our children and we can still grow and be at the cutting edge of those changes here in Virginia and all across the country. Terry understands that.

We know that investing in basic research, science, makes sense for America. It always has. And, Virginia, part of the reason why Virginia has grown so much during your lifetimes is because this has been a centerpiece of research and development, particularly up here in Northern Virginia. We've seen it.

So that makes our economy work better and makes our businesses thrive and allows them to compete all across the world. It makes our military outstanding. That innovative drive, that's part of what makes America special.

Now, Terry's opponent, I guess he's got other ideas in mind. But I can tell you, we will not create jobs when you focus on things like attacking Social Security. Now, that doesn't create jobs. It doesn't create jobs when you go after scientists and you try to offer your own alternative theories of how things work—[*laughter*]—and engage in litigation around stuff that isn't political. It has to do with what's true. It has to do with facts. You don't argue with facts.

You don't create jobs and help the people of Virginia by trying to restrict the health care choices that women make. Women are capable of making those choices by themselves. That's not going to create jobs. Trying to cut off funding for Planned Parenthood, that's not something that will grow our economy. That's not going to help middle class families get ahead. It doesn't even help—it sure doesn't help making sure that our daughters have the same opportunities as our sons. That's not—[*applause*].

So look, here's the bottom line. You deserve a Governor who wants to move this Commonwealth forward, not backwards; a Governor who believes that we're better than the kind of ideological politics that we see all too often; somebody who understands that even if we don't agree on everything, there's no reason we can't make progress on the issues that we do

agree on—and by the way, that we can disagree without being disagreeable.

Now, Terry McAuliffe will be that Governor. And you know that. Otherwise, you wouldn't be at this rally. Right? You know that Terry is the right man for the job. That's why you've devoted so much time and energy and effort to get him elected, because you want somebody in the statehouse who is going to be waking up every single day thinking about you.

But here's the thing: You've got to finish the job. You are just a few hours away from when the polls open here in the Commonwealth. And—I know Terry feels this—nothing makes me more nervous than when my supporters start feeling too confident, so I want to put the fear of God in all of you. [*Laughter*] All right? Virginia, historically, has always been a swing State. And this race will be close, because past races in Virginia have always been close. And the question is going to be whether or not you are willing to outwork the other side.

In these closing hours, are you willing to knock on some more doors?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you willing to make some more phone calls?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you willing to talk to your friends and your neighbors and your coworkers?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you willing to make sure that those family members who don't always vote during off-year elections are getting to the polls? Are you willing to make your case every single hour, every single minute, every single second? Are you going to be willing to outwork and outhustle the other folks? Because I guarantee you Terry McAuliffe is going to be outworking and outhustling the other guy over the next few hours.

You can bring this home. You can make this happen. But you've got to make sure that everybody goes out on Tuesday and chooses a better future for Virginia and chooses a better future for America and chooses Terry McAuliffe to be the next Governor of the great Commonwealth of Virginia!

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:28 p.m. at Washington-Lee High School. In his remarks, he referred to Dori, Jack, Mary, Sally, and Peter McAuliffe, children of Mr. McAuliffe; actor Kerry Washington; and Republican gubernatorial candidate Kenneth T. Cuccinelli of Virginia.

Remarks Honoring the 2013 Stanley Cup Champion Chicago Blackhawks
November 4, 2013

The President. Please, everybody, have a seat. It is my pleasure to welcome back the Chicago Blackhawks to the White House. We have some very proud Blackhawks fans here. A couple I want to point out in particular: Senator Dick Durbin from Illinois and Congressman Mike Quigley, who actually still has an old man's hockey game that he's in all the time. [*Laughter*] Any false teeth, Mike? Just a couple, all right. But this guy is a serious hockey player. So Mike Quigley.

Now, since I took office, we've hosted a lot of championship teams from Boston and New York, Pittsburgh, Miami, but since I've been President, only one team has brought a world championship to my hometown of Chicago. And now the Blackhawks have done it twice. [*Applause*] Twice!

Three years ago, the Hawks won their first Stanley Cup in 49 years. And keep in mind, the Cubs have been waiting for 105—[*laughter*]—so 49 might have not seemed so bad. But luckily, the second Stanley Cup came just a little bit quicker.

From the very beginning of last season, when these guys won their first six games in a row, we had a feeling that this was a team on the move. And we were right.

With Coach Q behind the bench, Hawks dominated the regular season. In the playoffs,

Captain Jonathan Toews led the team all the way for the second time, and he's still only, by the way, 25 years old. Now, I don't remember everything I was doing when I was 25, but I wasn't doing that. [*Laughter*] That I'm pretty certain of. Incredible leadership on his part.

Patrick Kane, the playoff MVP, helped to send this team to the finals in an incredible double overtime. I will say, some of the games were just stressful though. [*Laughter*] I was getting a little tense

Duncan Keith had an interesting first round: scored a goal in game three. Then he flew home to Chicago to be with his wife for the birth of their son Colton. Then, he flew back to Minneapolis the same day, arrived 2 hours before the drop of the puck, helped lead the team to a win that put them up 3 to 1 in the series. And about 6 weeks later, Colton may have become the youngest person ever to be hoisted by the Cup. [*Laughter*] That hadn't been happening before.

Finally, we've got Bryan Bickell and Dave Bolland. With less than 2 minutes left in game six of the finals—the Hawks down by just one goal—teamed up to score two goals in just 17 seconds to bring the Cup back to Chicago—17 seconds. Now, that's the kind of clutch performance that would make Jordan proud, which is why the statue was wearing a Blackhawks jersey, I think, during the playoffs.

So this team is a great example of what Chicago is all about. It's not just, by the way, because of what they've done on the ice. In game six, Andrew Shaw got hit in the face by a puck. It earned him more than a few stitches, but after the game, he decided to make the best of a painful situation. When those stitches came out, he auctioned every one of them off. [*Laughter*] Now, it does raise the question, like, who's buying sutures? [*Laughter*] Right? Somebody bid on this stuff. He raised almost $20,000 for the V Foundation to help cancer research.

And he's not the only guy with a big heart back here. This morning the entire team paid a visit to our wounded warriors of Walter Reed, helping to raise the spirits of men and women who have sacrificed so much for this country. And when I had a chance to have some of our wounded warriors in the room with these guys beforehand, I said, I love the Blackhawks, I love all my sports teams, but obviously, our best team, our most important team are those folks who every day serve us in uniform and keep us free. So we really just are grateful to them.

So these are not just good hockey players, they are good guys. And that helps explain why 2 million Chicago fans came out to Grant Park to celebrate bringing home the Cup. Speaking of Grant Park, we were originally going to let Corey Crawford say a few words today—[*laughter*]—but we thought we'd keep this family event family friendly. [*Laughter*] You guys have been hanging out with Rahm Emanuel too much. [*Laughter*]

So congratulations again to the Blackhawks. To the Bulls, Bears, Cubs, White Sox—I am term limited, so you guys have got to get moving. I need to see you here soon. Championships belong in Chicago. So, to the Blackhawks, thank you for bringing it back home. Thanks for bringing the Stanley Cup.

Chairman Wirtz, do you want to say something?

Chairman W. Rockwell Wirtz. Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the Chicago Blackhawks, thank you for this incredible honor. I can assure you, these fine players, beginning with Captain Jonathan Toews, will never take these visits for granted. You can be proud the way that these players play for your home team—hockey team.

More than that, they are gifted athletes who not only win championships, but go a long way in breaking gridlock if you allow them into Congress. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's true. I should try a hockey stick—during the shutdown—[*laughter*]—I should have just seen how that worked.

Mr. Wirtz. But thank you once again on behalf of the team and our fans, and please accept this jersey as a gesture for our gratitude.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his re-

marks, he referred to Joel Quenneville, head coach, Jonathan Toews, Dave Bolland, and Andrew Shaw, centers, Patrick Kane, right wing, Duncan Keith, defenseman, Bryan Bickell, left wing, and Corey Crawford, goaltender, Chicago Blackhawks; Kelly-Rae Keith, wife, and Colton Keith, son, of Mr. Keith; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; and Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL.

Remarks at the Organizing for Action Obamacare Summit
November 4, 2013

Hello, everybody! Hey! Thank you, everybody. Have a seat, have a seat. [*Applause*] Hey! It is good to see you. And thank you to—give Leslie a big round of applause for the wonderful introduction. Leslie is an example of folks on the ground who are just working day in, day out, through rain and—I guess no snow in Florida, but—[*laughter*]—rain or hot sun. But it's just a real honor to have somebody like Leslie introduce me, because that's what not only our health reform effort is all about, but that's what our politics is all about. She's just a great example, as are all of you.

I want to thank two leaders who have been working really hard to do the same on behalf of people that they serve. First of all, Governor Deval Patrick in Massachusetts, who we love. And Congressman Eliot Engel, who's been doing outstanding work. Give Eliot a big round of applause.

And I am proud to be with all of you. Some of your groups who are represented here have made access to affordable health care your mission. That's what you do. You've been organizing, even before I was President, because you understood how important it was. Some of you have made this the cause of your lives. So today I'm here to simply say thank you. We could not have passed this law without you, and we're not going to be able to get the job done without you.

It was 5 years ago today that I had the honor of being elected President. Some of you remember, I had no gray hair—[*laughter*]—and Malia came up to here—[*laughter*]—and Sasha was about here. And across so many fronts, we've made just incredible progress. In other areas, we've still got more work to do. But there's not a day that goes by that I am not incredibly humbled by this extraordinary privilege to be able to serve the American people.

And it fills me with resolve—every time I meet folks like you each and every day, it fills me with resolve—to make sure that every minute, every hour of every day that I'm in this office, I am working hard to make sure that your lives and your children's lives and grandchildren's lives are just a little bit better.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. And during the campaign, I made you a promise. I promised that by the end of my first term, I would have passed health care reform into law. I would have signed that bill. And thanks to your help, we did that. We got it done.

Now, let's face it, a lot of us didn't realize that passing the law was the easy part. [*Laughter*] But there's been so much noise and so much misinformation and this incredible organized effort to block the notion that everybody should have affordable health care in this country that I think it's important for us to step back and take a look at what's already been accomplished, because a lot of times, it doesn't make news. Controversies make news, but what's happened quietly across the country over the last 3 years hasn't got a lot of attention. In fact, a lot of the people who are benefiting don't even know it.

Because of you, the insurance market now has the strongest consumer protections that this country has ever known: no more discriminating against kids with preexisting conditions, no more dropping your policy when you get sick, no more lifetime limits on the care that you can receive. All of that and more is part of a new patient's bill of rights that's smack dab in the middle of the Affordable Care Act, and it's helping people right now.

Because of you, there are 3 million young adults under the age of 26 that are getting coverage by staying on their parent's plan right now, including Leslie's son. That happened because of you. Because of you, millions of seniors on Medicare have saved hundreds of dollars on their prescription medicine. It's already happened. They may not be aware of it, but that's already taking place. They're saving money because of the work that you did.

More than a hundred million Americans have gotten free preventive care like mammograms and contraceptive care with no copays. That's all part of the law. Because of you, millions of Americans will soon know the security of health care, in some cases for the first time, in States where Governors have chosen to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. Arkansas has covered almost 14 percent of its uninsured already. Think about that: Fourteen percent of the uninsured in Arkansas are already covered just because of the work that you did. Oregon has covered 10 percent of its uninsured already. [*Applause*] Got some Oregon folks in the house. [*Laughter*]

The—and what's been encouraging is, you've got some conservative Republican Governors who, in some cases, have put aside politics to do the same. They've recognized, this is too good a deal for the people of our State for us to pass up even if it's not convenient politics for us. And I'm proud of them for doing that. And I hope more will too. Because nobody deserves to be denied health care because of politics.

And because of you, the Affordable Care Act created new marketplaces where Americans without health care and Americans who buy it on their own can shop and buy quality private insurance plans. Insurers in the marketplace can no longer use your medical history to charge you more. If you've got a preexisting condition, they've got to take you. Folks who've been sick have finally the same chance to buy quality, affordable health care as everybody else. And that's happening because of you.

A lot of folks are going to qualify for new tax credits that will immediately bring down the price even further. For a young person who's trying several jobs until they find that one that sticks, that means they're going to be able to buy insurance that gives them the freedom to pursue the careers that they want without fear that an illness or an accident will derail their dreams.

And most of the young people in this country who don't have health insurance currently, they're going to be able to get it for less than their cell phone bill, less than their cable bill. That's happening because of you.

So it's important sometimes to just step back and say, all that stuff is already happening. A lot of it got underreported, kind of crept up on people. And as we move forward, you've got to keep that in mind.

Now, there have been some tough parts, let's face it. The truth of the matter is, is that while ultimately, healthcare.gov, the website, is going to be the easiest place to shop for and buy these new plans—and it's getting faster and more stable—it's not where it needs to be yet. I'm not happy about it, as you might imagine. [*Laughter*] I'm not happy about it, because I know that people need health care and this is the right place to get it.

I know you're not happy about it because as long as the website is not working the way it should, it makes it harder for you to help them get covered. And that's unacceptable, and I'm taking responsibility to make sure that it gets fixed. And it will be fixed. We're working overtime to get it fixed.

But in the meantime, as you go back to your home States, I just want to remind everybody that they can still apply for coverage by phone, by mail, in person. There was a time when the Internet didn't exist. [*Laughter*] It wasn't that long ago. A lot of programs like Medicaid still don't operate electronically. And so there are ways for us to still work to make sure that people are getting the opportunity to buy affordable, quality health care.

And remember, we're only 1 month into a 6-month open enrollment period. Everybody who wants to get insurance through the marketplace, they'll be able to get it. It's not as if

this is a 1-day sale or something. [*Laughter*] Right? So we've just got to keep on working.

Now, the other news that people have focused on lately has to do with notices that some Americans have gotten from their insurance companies suggesting that, because of the Affordable Care Act, they may be losing the plan that they bought. Now, while virtually every insurer is offering new, better plans and competing for these folks' business, I realize that can be scary for people if they just get some notice like that. So we've got to make sure that we're getting them the right information.

Remember that one of the reasons that we took up health care reform was not just to help the uninsured, but also the underinsured or the badly insured. People forget how unfair and unaffordable the status quo has been for millions of Americans, millions of hard-working families who live in constant fear that just one illness or accident could cost them their home or their life savings. Sometimes, by the way, they don't know how vulnerable they are because when you look at the fine print, it turns out that a whole bunch of things that people think are covered aren't covered. We know because we heard the stories of people saying, I'd been paying premiums all these years, and suddenly, I found out that I've got all these out-of-pocket expenses that I can't afford, and I'm going broke. That's part of what health care reform was about. We did this to put an end to the days when the individual market had almost no standards, when every year thousands of Americans would be dropped from their coverage.

People are acting like this is some new phenomenon. Every year, there was churn in this individual market. The average increase was double digits on premiums in this same market, with or without affordable—the Affordable Care Act. People were getting oftentimes a very bad deal. And as a consequence, what you had is Americans who'd be dropped from coverage, exposed to massive double-digit premium increases, or most frequently, they'd just be denied access altogether because of some preexisting condition.

Now, if you have or had one of these plans before the Affordable Care Act came into law and you really like that plan, what we said was, you could keep it if it hasn't changed since the law was passed. So we wrote into the Affordable Care Act, you're grandfathered in on that plan.

But if the insurance company changes it, then what we're saying is, they've got to change it to a higher standard. They've got to make it better. They've got to improve the quality of the plan that they're selling. That's part of the promise that we made too. That's why we went out of our way to make sure that the law allowed for grandfathering, but if we had allowed these old plans to be downgraded or sold to new enrollees once the law had already passed, then we would have broken an even more important promise: making sure that Americans gain access to health care that doesn't leave them one illness away from financial ruin.

So the bottom line is, is that we are making the insurance market better for everybody. And that's the right thing to do. That is the right thing to do.

So today, that promise means that every plan in the marketplace has to cover a core set of minimum benefits, like maternity care and preventive care, mental health care, prescription drug benefits, hospitalization. Preexisting conditions like allergies or heartburn—[*laughter*]—can't be an excuse for you being charged more. Being a woman can't be used as an excuse to be charged more.

Which means if you couldn't afford coverage before for a child with asthma, well, now he's covered. If you're one of the one in five Americans with a mental illness, you're covered. If you're a young couple that's expecting a baby, congratulations. [*Laughter*] And by the way, you're covered. [*Laughter*]

So we should encourage any American who gets one of these letters to shop around in the new marketplace. Now, I recognize that as—while the website isn't working as fast as it needs to, that makes it tougher and that makes it scarier for folks. We want them immediately to get the information that they need, to

understand they've got more competition and more options.

Now, insurers are offering these new options, and they don't just want to keep their current policyholders, they want to cover the uninsured too. And because of the competition between insurers and the new health care tax credits, most people will be able to buy better plans for the same price or even cheaper than what they've gotten before.

Now, some Americans with higher incomes will pay more on the front end for better insurance with better benefits and better protections that could eventually help them a lot, even if right now they'd rather be paying less. But nobody is going to lose their right to health insurance coverage. Nobody can be dropped altogether. Those days are over. They're not coming back. That happened because of the work that you did.

So the—[*applause*]. Look, here's the bottom line. I don't need to tell any of you because you've been on the frontlines on this. Change isn't easy, period. Change in this area is especially hard because it touches on everybody. Everybody's lives are impacted and it's a very personal issue. And when you're undertaking something this big, this important, like health care reform, we knew we were going to get resistance. Maybe not—[*laughter*]—to the same degree as we've gotten. But there's a reason why this hasn't gotten done before.

And by the way, there's a reason why the opponents of this law throughout have never been able to actually offer a better alternative. Right? Initially, they said they would. [*Laughter*] But they didn't, because they understand that it's hard. But when the unexpected happens, when the unanticipated happens, we're just going to work on it, and we're going to fix things that aren't working the way they should be. We're going to smooth this thing out, and we're just going to keep on going. We are going to keep on going because it is too important to too many people, not just in this generation, but in future generations. And we've got to make sure that we stay on track to make this work.

So I don't want any of you to ever lose sight of why we got involved in this thing in the first place. We did it for every mother who was desperate because of a child with a preexisting condition. We did it for every hard-working American who was forced to give up their insurance and hang his or her fortunes on chance. We did it for the same reason that Leslie did: because of our own experiences or heartbreak under a broken health care system. We decided we need to build something better, no matter how hard it is.

And here's the thing: Every day, there are new stories to tell. I hear them every single day. And I know you do too: when you help folks enroll for new plans; when you help small-business owners cover their workers for the first time; when you help a young woman get the coverage that she deserves.

A couple weeks ago, I got a letter from Jeffrey Huff, Lexington, Kentucky. Currently, Jeffrey and his girlfriend pay $1,500 a month to cover their family of six. Once the marketplaces opened, his girlfriend went online, enrolled in a new plan that will cut their monthly cost by more than half, drop their deductible from $3,000 to $500.

So he told me in his letter that it "breathed life back into our family. We can't wait until January 1." He said if he could give one message to the American people, it's this: "It works. Obamacare is working for people."

Now, stories—let's face it, stories like Jeffrey's may not get all the media attention, but they're why we did this. They're what we're fighting for. And I know you hear them too. So I'm asking all of you to go out there and share these stories far and wide. Because it's nothing new to have a bunch of folks spreading fear and misinformation and confusion and cynicism about this law; we've been facing that for 4 years. We're used to that.

What's new is that today, there are Americans with health care for the very first time. Today, there are Americans whose lives have been saved by preventive care that they wouldn't have gotten before. Today, there are Americans who can breathe easy again, free from the crushing fear that an illness or acci-

dent means they lose everything. So the rhetoric of reform is becoming the reality of reform. And we're not going back.

So just remember this: I have run my last political campaign, but I'll tell you what, we've—I've got one more campaign in me: the campaign to make sure that this law works for every single person in America. And I'm asking for your help. I need your help to implement this law. I need your help to educate folks about this law. I—you need to keep knocking on doors and making phone calls and traveling all across your States.

For over a century, folks have argued that in this country, the security of affordable health care is a privilege. It's not a privilege, it is a right. We are making that right a reality, but we've got to make sure that all of you stay on it, and you're going to have me every step of the way.

God bless you, everybody. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. at the St. Regis Washington, D.C. hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Leslie Sheffield, volunteer, Organizing for Action, and her son Andy.

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Dinner
November 4, 2013

Thank you, everybody! Thank you. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

Jim claims that he always gives short introductions. That is not true. [*Laughter*] That's why I walked out here with him, to keep him on point. [*Laughter*] But I can't thank Jim enough for everything that he's done. He and I were just reminiscing a little bit backstage. Somebody had brought for me to sign a New York Times article—New York Times Magazine—dated November 2011. And it was some—it has a picture of me on the cover and some numbers and it says, "Is Obama Toast?" [*Laughter*] And so Jim had that blown up, and I'm signing that as well. [*Laughter*]

A couple other people I want to thank: Jon Carson, who does extraordinary work every day; we love Jon. We miss him over at the White House, but he is in the right place because he's one of the best organizers I have ever met—of anything. And he is doing just great, great work with OFA.

And then two elected officials—I see Congressman Eliot Engel here, who is doing a great job on behalf of his district back in New York. And then somebody who is not just a great colleague, but a great friend. When Deval—Deval and I have sort of hopscotched a little bit, because initially, I met Deval because he came into Chicago to campaign for me when I was still running for the U.S. Senate. And we had a mutual friend who introduced us. And Deval, who had worked at the Justice Department and had some modest celebrity, but also was just good-looking and smart, so people like to hear him talk—[*laughter*]—so he came and did a little fundraiser for me. And so then I won the Senate race. And then I was in the Senate, and one day, he comes by to visit, and he says, "I'm thinking about running for Governor." He said, "You've won a Senate seat; how hard can this be?" [*Laughter*]

And so then he ran a historic race for Governor. And then when I decided to run for President, I sought his counsel and advice. And there's nobody who I'm not just more fond of, but who I actually think is a better public servant anywhere in the country, than the Governor of Massachusetts. So Deval Patrick.

So because I've got a bunch of friends here, I'm not going to give a big windup. I want to basically spend some time in conversation, as we usually do when we get together. I'll just make a couple of points.

Number one, the work that we've done this year has been challenging, to say the least, because of a Congress that has been resistant to everything. And I know that sometimes, that causes great frustration, even when there's not a Government shutdown. But what I want to just remind people of is that this Government is an enormous enterprise, and so even as

sometimes we see ourselves getting stymied at the congressional level, at the administrative level, in the work that we're doing, all kinds of changes are happening. Whether it's on climate change or education or speeding up services to veterans or making sure that we are creating the kind of job training programs that are going to put people back to work or making your tax dollars work more effectively to rebuild our infrastructure in this country, we're accomplishing a lot of stuff.

It doesn't always get publicity, partly because a lot of times it's not controversial. But slowly, surely, we keep on making progress on the things that you care very deeply about. And I want you guys to understand that and know that.

Number two, obviously, we've been very frustrated—I, personally, have been frustrated—with the problems around the website on health care. And it's inexcusable, and there are a whole range of things that we're going to need to do once we get this fixed: to talk about Federal procurement when it comes to IT and how that's organized. But the model of providing health insurance for all Americans and using not just what government can do, but also private sector competition and choice, that model is working.

We have in most States massively expanded the choices that people have available, and because of competition and these insurers having to chase after folks' business, premiums are lower, the deals are better, and people ultimately are going to be benefiting greatly across the board. And the website will get fixed.

So there are going to be challenges and bumps along this path—we always knew there would be—because we are not only initiating one of the largest changes in one of the largest sectors of our economy in history, but we're doing so under a very hostile political environment.

Nevertheless, the mission is the right one, and the plan is the right one. And we are going to look back a year from now, 3 years from now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now, and the American people are going to understand that in this country, finally, after decades, we are going to make sure that every single person in this country can get affordable health care. And we're going to be driving down health care costs at the same time. That's point number two.

Point number three, despite the resistance of Congress, slowly, surely, we're starting to see some common sense starting to prevail. It hasn't quite gotten over the hump, but you're starting to see in the Senate in particular—we had already gotten the vote on immigration reform, bipartisan vote. It's ready to go. We still need help from the House, but there's still an opportunity.

We're seeing it, perhaps tonight, on the ENDA vote, which—nondiscrimination around sexual orientation—where we think that we'll probably get this done in the Senate. Again, there is going to be resistance in the House. But the more that we can continue at a grassroots level to speak out on behalf of the values that we care about—they're mainstream values. They're the values that 60, 70, 80 percent of the country believe in. And they're also the values that young people and future generations believe in.

And so I want everybody to understand that change in America has always been slow, and sometimes, you take a step back for every two steps you take forward. But inexorably, the idea of a more tolerant, more prosperous country that offers more opportunity to more people, that's an idea that the vast majority of Americans believe in.

And the challenge we've got is that with a Federal Government that has been gridlocked and a filter through which people see and receive information about government that is tilted towards cynicism, I think sometimes people, particularly on our side, end up feeling frustrated or despairing. And I'm here to tell you, we've got a righteous wind at our backs, and we are, on each of these fights, going to just keep on steadily making progress. And when the journey is over—now, the journey of the country is never over, but the journey of my Presidency is over, and we look back, I think people are going to be maybe even surprised themselves at how much we've gotten done. And that's because of you and the support that all of you provide. So I'm grateful for it.

And with that, let me start taking some questions or suggestions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:06 p.m. in the Decanter restaurant at the St. Regis Washington, D.C. hotel. In his remarks, he referred to James A. Messina, national chairman, and Jon Carson, executive director, Organizing for Action. He also referred to S. 815.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Business Leaders To Discuss Immigration Reform

November 5, 2013

In addition to talking about the Red Sox—[*laughter*]—we are here to talk about immigration reform. We've got an outstanding group of leaders here, a wide cross-section of industry. We've got manufacturers, service sector, food, high tech. And they represent just a small cross-section of the businesses all across the country who are deeply committed to making sure that we get comprehensive immigration reform done and done quickly.

Just last week, we had 600 business and faith leaders who came to emphasize that this is something that is not only the right thing to do, but it's also critical to our economy. We know that the Senate bipartisan bill that already passed would grow the economy by $1.4 trillion above and beyond the growth that's already taking place. We know it will reduce our deficit by $850 billion. This is not—these aren't my estimates, these are independent estimates that had been made about the salutary effect that comprehensive immigration reform will have on our economy. And these businesses understand that.

They understand that if we are serious about border security, if we do a better job of streamlining the legal immigration system, if we are holding employers who aren't doing the right thing accountable, and we provide a pathway to citizenship for those who have paid a fine, learned English, are getting to the back of the line, taking their responsibilities, that all together, these businesses are going to have more customers, we're going to see people who are currently working here out of the shadows, paying taxes, and getting right with the law. We have the opportunity when young people come to this country to study on our dime, making sure that if they're able and willing, they can stay here, start businesses of their own, contribute to our economy, help our exports.

So this is something that has strong bipartisan support. Keep in mind that my predecessor, George W. Bush, was a strong supporter of this. We have a fascinating cross-section of people—some unlikely bedfellows, some very liberal folks and very conservative folks—who all believe that now is the time to get this done. And as we saw in the Senate, there is the strong potential for bipartisan support.

So what I'm going to be talking to the business community about is how we can continue to amplify this issue in the coming weeks. There's no reason why we can't get this done before the end of the year. And I continue to be hopeful that with the leadership of many who are around this table, who represent hundreds of thousands of employees and billions of dollars of assets, who are important in their communities all across the country, them joining up with law enforcement, clergy, citizens to make the case, that ultimately, folks up on Capitol Hill will do the right thing.

And although right now there's been some resistance from House Republicans, what's been encouraging is, is that there are a number of House Republicans who have said, we think this is the right thing to do as well. And it's my estimation that we actually have votes to get comprehensive immigration reform done in the House right now.

The politics are challenging for the Speaker and others, and we want to make it as easy for him as possible. This is not an issue where we're looking for a political win. This is one

where we're looking for a substantive win for the U.S. economy and the American people and the businesses that are represented here.

So I'm very grateful to all of you who have joined us. But we're going to be pushing to make sure that we send out that clarion call up towards Capitol Hill, see if we can get this done before the end of the year. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the Passage of Marriage Equality Legislation in Illinois
November 5, 2013

Tonight I applaud the men and women of the Illinois General Assembly, a body in which I was proud to serve, for voting to legalize marriage equality in my home State.

As President, I have always believed that gay and lesbian Americans should be treated fairly and equally under the law. Over time, I also came to believe that same-sex couples should be able to get married like anyone else. So tonight Michelle and I are overjoyed for all the committed couples in Illinois whose love will now be as legal as ours and for their friends and family who have long wanted nothing more than to see their loved ones treated fairly and equally under the law.

I also commend the members of the General Assembly for approaching this issue in a fair and open way and for recognizing the importance of our commitment to religious freedom by engaging the religious community in this conversation. Throughout this debate, they've made it clear that this is about civil marriages and civil laws and made sure that churches and other institutions of faith are still free to make their own decisions that conform to their own teachings.

As I said in my Inaugural Address last January, our journey as a nation is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law, for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. And tonight I'm so proud that the men and women elected to serve the people of the great State of Illinois have chosen to take us one step further on that journey to perfect our Union.

Remarks at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas
November 6, 2013

The President. Thank you, Edna. Give Edna a big round of applause. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. And let me just make some special mention of some people in addition to Edna who are here.

First of all, your outstanding mayor, Mike Rawlings, is here. Outstanding county judge, Clay Jenkins, who's doing a great job on affordable care. Thank you, Clay. Wonderful Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson is here. And we want to thank Rabbi David Stern and Rabbi Asher Knight of Temple Emanu-El for hosting us here today.

And the main reason I'm here is to thank all of you. Edna's story is a story that is repeated all across the country: people who got sick and didn't have health insurance; folks who thought they had health insurance; and then, turned out, because of the fine print or them not filling something out right, they were short of what they needed in terms of getting healed.

And when I ran for office, obviously, we were in the midst of a great recession, and my number-one priority was making sure that we didn't go into a great depression and making sure that we started putting people back to work. We've now seen the economy begin to recover, although sometimes, Washington is not helpful with things like the shutdown. We've seen 7½ million new jobs created. We've seen exports at record levels. We've seen a lot of growth in places like Dallas, and

people are starting to get their footing back, home prices starting to recover.

But what I also understood was that if we did not start tackling our health care system in a serious way, it would continue to undermine our economy, it would continue to hurt families, and it would continue to hurt businesses.

And there's a reason why it had never been done before. Starting with Harry Truman, people had talked about how we were going to make sure that everybody had affordable, quality health care. But through Democratic and Republican Presidents and Congresses, we couldn't get it done. And the reason is it's hard. It's a big chunk of the economy, and a lot of people, even if they don't like what is going on, are always nervous about change. So it was a challenge. But we were able to get it done, in part because of grassroots folks like you that fought so hard to make sure that we were able to deliver on universal health care.

And that is what this is all about. Ultimately, all the politics, all the chatter sometimes leaves out the fact that the system we had, the status quo just wasn't working for too many people. And so it was important for us, as difficult and challenging as it has been, to go ahead and move forward to make sure that folks like Edna, when they go to the hospital because they've been stricken with an illness, know not only that they're going to get good care, but also that their families aren't going to go bankrupt just because somebody in the family got sick. That's what we've been fighting for.

Now, over the last 3 years, we've already put a whole bunch of benefits in place. A lot of people don't know that they're in place because of the Affordable Care Act, but they're already in place. So if you've got a child who's 25, didn't have health insurance, but now is on the parent's plan, the reason for that is because of the Affordable Care Act. Seniors are getting discounts on their prescription drugs, saving hundreds of dollars because we deepened the discount through the Affordable Care Act. Insurance companies have to treat customers right because of the Affordable Care Act. No more lifetime limits, no more dropping people just when they get sick.

But to finish the job, now what we've got to do is sign up those folks who don't have health insurance and improve insurance for those who are underinsured, who don't have very good insurance and have been subject to the whims of the insurance company. And that's what this is all about. And that's the challenge that we've got over the next month, 3 months, 6 months, next year. And if we get that done—when we get that done—then we will have created a stable system in which there's no reason why people shouldn't be getting health care in this country.

Now, I'm the first to say that the first month I've not been happy with. [*Laughter*] You've all heard about the website woes. Nothing drives me more crazy than the fact that right now, there's great insurance to be had out there, choice and competition, where people can save money for a better product, except too many folks haven't been able to get through the website.

Now, this is like having a really good product in a store, and the cash registers don't work and there aren't enough parking spots and nobody can get through the door. And so we are working overtime to get this fixed. And the website is already better than it was at the beginning of October, and by the end of this month, we anticipate that it is going to be working the way it is supposed to. All right? And folks are working 24/7 to make sure that happens.

But remember, the insurance is already there. And if people can't get through the website, they can get on the phone to the call center and people can take their application and walk them through this process, and people can apply in person if they've got committed folks who are out there helping people to sign up. And that's what all of you have been committed to doing.

And it is so important, because the truth of the matter is, even if the website were working a hundred percent, a lot of people would still need help to navigate through this stuff. A high percentage of people who don't have health care also might not have ready access to a computer right away, or it might be confusing for

them, and they would need people to help guide them through this process. And that's true, by the way, if they were buying any kind of insurance. Right? Sometimes, it's a complicated process.

So the commitment that all of you—that congregations, that faith-based groups—are engaged in is critically important. And it's not going to stop; even after the website is running perfectly, we're still going to need all of you to be making these efforts. And I want to make special mention of the mayor's and Clay's work and Bernice—Eddie Bernice's work to get people signed up, because that's the kind of commitment that we're going to need on the ground on a day-to-day basis.

So my main job here today is to say thank you. And as Clay has said, nothing is going to stop us from getting this done, because we're on the right side of history. It is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do for our economy, our businesses, and our families.

Now, the last point I want to make: I know that sometimes, this task is especially challenging here in the great Lone Star State. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We're up to the task.

The President. But I think that all of you understand that there's no State that actually needs this more than Texas. Think about it. We were just talking on the way over here that in addition to signing people up for the marketplaces so they can buy private insurance, part of the Affordable Care Act was expanding the number of working families who would qualify for Medicaid. Now, because of a Supreme Court ruling, it's voluntary, which States decide to expand Medicaid coverage, which don't.

Here in just the Dallas area, 133,000 people who don't currently have health insurance would immediately get health insurance without even having to go through the website if the State of Texas decided to do it. There's over $500 million just for this county that would come in to help families get health insurance—has nothing to do with the website—if the State of Texas made this decision. And your neighboring States have made that decision because they look at it and they say, this is a no-brainer, why would not—why would we not want to take advantage of this.

So the State of Arkansas has already reduced its number of uninsured by 14 percent already, just in the first month, by signing people up for expanded Medicaid—14 percent. State of Oregon, 10-percent reduction in the number of uninsured already, in the first month, right away, folks are signed up, just because the Governor and the legislature there made the right decision.

There's no reason why this State can't do the same.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. And—well, I mentioned that in the Dallas area it's 133,000 people who stand to benefit. Across this State, you've got a million people—because this is a big State—a million people, citizens, who don't have health insurance that could get health insurance right away if the State of Texas decided to take advantage of it.

So one of the things that sometimes gets me a little frustrated, although I understand it because I'm in politics, is folks who are complaining about how the website is not working and why isn't Obama fixing this and all these people are uninsured, and yet they're leaving a million people right now without health insurance that they could immediately fix.

Audience member. That's right. That's right.

The President. There's not a lot of logic to that.

But that's okay, because we've gone through barriers before; we have gone through struggles before. Eventually, though, if you stick with doing the right thing, you get it done. It will happen, all right?

And so I just want all of you to remember that, as challenging as this may seem sometimes, as frustrating as healthcare.gov may be sometimes, we are going to get this done. And when we do—when we do, not if—when we do, you're going to have families all across this great State of Texas who are going to have the security and the well-being of high-quality, affordable health insurance. And that's going to be good for business. It means that all the providers around here, instead of having to take in

folks in the emergency room, they suddenly have customers who have insurance. That means those of you who already have health insurance, your premiums will not be subsidizing folks who don't have health insurance. People will get preventive care, which means that people are likely to be healthier.

And that's within our power. That's within our grasp. So this is a pretty motivated group.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. This looks like a group that's ready to go.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I'm here to tell you that I'm going to be right there with you the entire way until we get this done and everybody in Texas and everybody all across this country have the affordable health care that they need.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. God bless the State of Texas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Dallas, TX, resident Edna Dean Pemberton, who introduced the President; and Gov. John A. Kitzhaber of Oregon.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Dallas

November 6, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

It is true, I remember being in this house with Peter and Lisa. [*Laughter*] Now, I did not recall having Peter and Lisa's three young sons, who are now towering over many of us. [*Laughter*] So it is a chronicle of how much time has passed. But Peter and Lisa have been great friends to the Democratic Party, to the Senate, efforts that we've had for a very long time. And we just want to say thank you for your incredible hospitality and friendship. It means a lot.

A couple of other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, your outstanding mayor, Mike Rawlings, is in the house. Your former mayor and my golf buddy, Ron Kirk, is gone. [*Laughter*] I'm tempted to talk about him while he's not here. [*Laughter*] But it might get back to him, so I'm not going to say anything about him other than, obviously, we love him.

And you have with you here today somebody who I genuinely consider one of the best public servants in the country, period, and the fact that he took on this thankless job of running around the country, helping to raise money and recruit outstanding candidates for the Senate is just a testimony to not only how much respect everybody in the Senate has for him, but also his willingness to work hard on behalf of the greater good. So we love Michael Bennet, Senator from Colorado.

Lisa's really generous introduction did remind me of a story that may be apocryphal, but I like to think it's true. Some of you who saw the movie "Lincoln" know that back in the day when Honest Abe was President, there were visiting hours at the White House. And so constituents who happened to come through Washington, they'd wait their turn, and there were office hours essentially for the President, and somebody could come in and they could ask for a Postmaster's appointment or some other appointment.

And one day, a guy comes in—very exercised—and he says: "You need to understand, Mr. Lincoln, that I've worked for you. I was a delegate in the nomination. Nobody is more responsible for getting you elected as President than I am. And I expect you to remember that." And Lincoln looked up from his desk, and he said, "Sir, I forgive you." [*Laughter*]

Now, I don't know if Lisa needs forgiveness—[*laughter*]—for having convinced me to do this. But the longer I'm in this office, the more humbled I am by the incredible privilege of serving. And one of the great things about being President is you get to see the whole country, and you get to meet everybody, and

you get to hear from everybody. And not everything you hear is going to be flattering to you, but you really see the panorama of American life.

And I was talking to Michael as we were flying over here about the frustrations and challenges that we've experienced in Congress. But I've got to tell you, I'm actually more optimistic now than when I ran. Now, that may seem puzzling to some folks, because obviously, I've got a bunch of dings and bruises and gray hair to show for everything that's happened over the last 5 years. But there is a goodness and decency at the core of the American people that sooner or later ends up coming to the fore.

And you see this in their communities and in their workplaces and in their places of worship. And the more I'm in this office, the more my goal is to simply reflect in our Government that same core decency and goodness and fellow feeling that Americans feel towards each other and their resilience and their strength and their capacity.

Now, when I look back over the last 5 years, the amount we've gotten done is actually pretty remarkable. We came in at a time when the country was careening towards a Great Depression, and we were able to arrest it. And now, over the last 3½ years, we've seen 7.5 million new jobs created. We were able to reform our financial system so that the likelihood of taxpayer-funded bailouts is a lot less than it was. We were able to expand funding for young people going to college. We were able to expand national service for young people who want to serve. We fought long and hard for consumer protections that weren't there before.

As Lisa mentioned, we are remaking the courts. I know that we've got some lawyers here, and here in Texas, sometimes people feel a little frustrated about the pace of appointments here in Texas. But you should know that in addition to the Supreme Court, we've been able to nominate and confirm judges of extraordinary quality all across the country on Federal benches. We're actually, when it comes to the district court, matching the pace of previous Presidents. When it comes to the appellate court, we're just a little bit behind, and we're just going to keep on focused on it.

And so in ways large and small, we've been able to have a substantial impact, and the country is better off than it was when we came in. But what I also know—and this is also something Michael and I talked about—is that we've sure got a lot of work to do.

The nature of the economy, because of globalization and technology, has changed. And so although some of us are doing better than ever before—probably better than any group of individuals in human history—we also have a middle class that is anxious and scared and have not fully recovered from that recession. We now have a couple of decades in which income and wages are stagnant, even though those at the very top are doing better than ever. Folks are worried about whether their children can match the same upward mobility and success that they achieved. There are pockets of poverty all across this country that have been stubbornly resistant to the programs that have been put in place.

And so in the 3 years that I have remaining, I am intent on squeezing every last bit of possibility to make sure that we're moving this country forward: to make us more competitive, to put business in a position to succeed, to make sure we're creating more jobs; that we're exporting more; that we stay on the cutting edge of science and research; that we educate our kids better than anybody else in the world does; and that our kids aren't loaded down with debt when they get that high-quality education; that we keep our people safe; that having wound down two wars, we make sure that we are judicious in terms of how we use military force around the world. So we've still got a lot of stuff on our agenda.

Now, all this stuff is achievable. And in fact, almost everything we've proposed garners majority support from the American people. When we talk about immigration reform, just to take one example and an example that has a big impact here in Texas, we've got the business community, we've got clergy, we've got law enforcement, we've got educators all looking at the fact that comprehensive immigration

reform—fixing a broken system—can be transformative. We could increase our economic growth by well over a trillion dollars. We could reduce our deficits by $800 million. We could make sure that every young person who's already in this country is able to achieve their dreams and continue to renew this great American story. And we've got bipartisan support.

When it comes to most of the agenda that we've put forward—whether it's having a sensible fiscal policy that deals with our long-term debt challenges, but still makes investments in education; when it comes to early childhood education, because we know the science tells us that if young people are getting that good head start, that they're more likely to succeed and fewer folks are likely to end up in prison or out of work, and that our society saves money in the long term—all those things have majority support.

So what's missing in our agenda is not that we aren't aligned with the American people. It's not that we're proposing things that are too far left or out of the mainstream. It has to do with the fact that we've got a Congress right now that's been dysfunctional. And the truth is that the only way that we are going to move this country forward so it can adapt to this rapidly changing world is if we have folks in Congress who want to get stuff done and are basing decisions not on short-term politics, but on the evidence, on facts, on what's best for us long term, who are thinking about the next generation and not just the next election.

And there are some Republicans who I think feel that way, but unfortunately, their voices are drowned out in their party right now. We know—Michael and I could name you, although we wouldn't do it in front of the press—[*laughter*].

Senator Michael F. Bennet. I did it before you got here. [*Laughter*]

The President. But we could name for you a whole bunch of Republicans who are good and decent people who are as frustrated as we are in some ways about what's happened to their party. But right now at least, there's a group that—and a few of them are from Texas, I've got to admit—[*laughter*]—who just aren't willing to do the hard work and the compromise necessary to move the country forward.

And so in that environment, it is absolutely critical that we transform Congress. And that's not going to happen without you. That is not going to happen without you. Because the way the political system works right now, it is biased and skewed away from common sense. The electorate has gotten more polarized, the media has gotten more polarized. Being extreme, being controversial tends to get you on TV and get your name out there. If you're just being sensible and saying, well, let's try to work together across the aisle, then you know you're going to live in obscurity. [*Laughter*] Because of super PACs now, the capacity for just a handful of folks to influence elections and to diminish the role of democracy and ordinary voters has never been greater.

And so we're going to need folks like you to step up and make sure that we can go out there and tackle the problems that are so important to tackle. Now, the great thing is, is that, in part because of Michael Bennet, we just recruited some outstanding candidates for the Senate. And we've got some incumbents who have been heroic and courageous under very difficult circumstances. But they're going to need help. And if we don't give them the help that they need, then we could end up with a situation in which we've got a majority Republican Senate, along with a majority Republican House. And if you think things are gridlocked and challenging right now, wait until that happens.

So we're going to have to push. This is not going to just fall in our laps. The map is difficult for the Senate this year. And the good news is, I'm confident that if our candidates are well funded and you guys and your friends and colleagues not just here, but across Texas and across the country are doing what you can do, I think we're going to win. I think we'll do well.

And let me just wrap up by using two separate examples of both the challenges and the opportunities. The first is with the shutdown. We had not only a shutdown of several weeks, we had the possibility of defaulting for the first

time in 200 years. That is not a mainstream—or at least, historically, has not been a mainstream—Republican position. That's not a business-friendly position. That's a radical position, and it's a destructive position.

And frankly, I think there were a whole bunch of Republican Senators, at least, and a number of House Members who knew it was a bad idea, but because of the dynamic in their party right now, they felt obliged to go along with that kind of strategy. Well, we've got to liberate those reality-based Republicans from some of the extreme impulses in that party. And part of the way is—doing that is sending a clear message: This is not how we govern. This is not what America is about. We can have disagreements on budget. We can have disagreements on policy. But what we don't do is hurt the American people or the American economy just for an ideological point.

But if they don't see a cost for those kinds of strategies, then they'll keep doing it. And the only way to extract a cost when it comes to politicians is during election time.

Now, I'll give you the second example of what precipitated—according to at least one Senator from Texas—the necessity for the shutdown, and that is the Affordable Care Act. Now, I think it's fair to say that right now I am not happy with some IT people in Washington. [*Laughter*] The website has not functioned. Nobody is angrier than I am about it. And we've got to make sure that we get it fixed, and we're going to get it fixed by the end of this month.

But what the mayor and I were just talking about when we went over to Temple Emanu-El—because we had a whole bunch of volunteers there—is to remind everybody what's at stake here. In the State of Texas, you've got more uninsured people than anyplace in the country. Higher percentage of people are uninsured here than anywhere else. Setting the website aside, if the Governor and the legislature chose to do so, right now they could insure a million people in Texas. A million people could have health insurance; 133,000 could have health insurance in Dallas alone, 133,000 people who right now aren't getting regular checkups, don't have the capacity to deal with chronic illnesses, end up in the emergency room, cost every one of you money in terms of higher premiums because the hospitals and providers got to get their money back from somewhere. And the only reason we're not doing it is ideology.

It's not a technical problem. That's not a website problem. That's just a decision, we're not going to expand Medicaid despite the fact that it is a good deal for the State of Texas.

Neighboring Arkansas has reduced its uninsured by 14 percent in the last month just by expanding Medicaid. Oregon reduced it by 10 percent. Why wouldn't the State of Texas want to do the same thing? Well, it's because ideology has taken precedence over common sense and helping people.

In each instance, the question is going to be whether that kind of bullheadedness, that kind of strategy is rewarded. I don't think it should be. And I don't think—I don't even think it's a Democratic or Republican issue. I think this is an issue of what kind of country do we want to live in. Why would we purposely want to make sure that people don't have health insurance?

The website will get fixed. The insurance plans that are out there for people for the first time are going to save lives and save people money. But that attitude is something that we've got to change, and you have the power to change it.

So just to finish up here, whether you're here because you care about Federal courts, you care about women's reproductive freedom, whether you care about making sure every child is educated, whether you're concerned about making sure that we've got a safety net for our seniors, whether you're concerned about staying on the forefront of research and science, whether you're concerned about making sure our veterans are properly cared for, whatever it is that brings you here—or whether you just came here because Peter told you to—[*laughter*]—more importantly, Lisa told you to—[*laughter*]—the stakes are high. And it's not easy.

Sometimes, I worry, because everybody had such a fun experience in '08, at least that's how

it seemed in retrospect. [*Laughter*] And "yes, we can," and the slogans and the posters, et cetera, sometimes, I worry that people forget, change in this country has always been hard. Every step of the way—women's rights, workers' rights, civil rights, Medicare, Social Security—everything we value in terms of making sure that everybody has a fair shot in this country required a fight. And it was bumpy, and it was difficult, and it was controversial. But over time, we got it done.

And that got done not just because of who was President at any given time. It got done not just because of brilliant policy. It got done because ordinary folks decided they were going to fight for it and they supported candidates who were willing to fight as well. And that struggle continues. That journey continues. And I'm just glad that I've got all of you along for the ride.

Thank you. I appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. at the residence of Peter A. and Lisa V. Kraus. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz; and Gov. J. Richard Perry of Texas. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Highland Park, Texas

November 6, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Well, I'm going to be very brief on the front end because I want to spend some time getting questions and comments.

First, I just want to say thanks to Russell and Dorothy for their hospitality. This is not the first time that they have hosted us here. I think the first time I was here, I was still running for the Senate, or at least I had—maybe I had been elected to the Senate and I was helping the DSCC, although I'm trying to remember who was the chair at the time.

Fundraiser host Russell W. Budd. It was November of 2005, and we also had Senator Joe Biden——

The President. And Harry Reid.

Mr. Budd. And Harry Reid.

The President. It was a powerful combination. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Budd. Yes, it was.

The President. But the Budds couldn't have been more gracious then and have continued to be supportive in so many efforts throughout the years. So we appreciate their friendship and their support.

Some of you I know well; some of you I'm meeting for the first time. I hope all of you get a chance to know Michael Bennet, because although he's not your Senator—he's the Senator from Colorado—he is not only heading up the DSCC, but he's also one of the best public servants that we've got in the country. And we're really proud of all the great work he's doing, so give him a big round of applause.

We have had an interesting year, most recently, a Government shutdown, and we came close to defaulting for the first time in 200 years. And I think it's fair to say that that was a—just a symptom of a larger challenge that we've got, which is that although the American people are full of common sense and in their workplaces and in their families and their congregations, on the soccer fields and all the various parts of their life, they're looking out for one another, and they're making good decisions and are resilient in the face of challenges, that's not very often reflected in Washington.

And we've got two parties, but one party has become captive, I think, to a fairly extreme faction that thinks compromise is a dirty word and has not thought of government service—and the Federal Government in particular—as a potential engine for individuals across the country making it if they work hard and if they act responsibly.

Traditionally, we had a bipartisan consensus that this country runs because of individualism and self-reliance, but that we also create

various ladders of opportunity so anybody anywhere, no matter what they look like, where they come from, who they love, they can make it; that there are certain things that we do in common. We make sure there are schools for every child. We make sure that we have regulations to keep our air and water clean. We build transportation hubs and networks so that businesses can move products and goods, not just across the country, but around the world. We invest in research and development so that we can stay on the cutting edge. We enforce our laws so that everybody has equal access to justice.

And historically, those things have been struggles, but at least in most of my lifetime, you had both Democrats and Republicans who would affirm those values even if they had differences in tactics or different particular political programs. That's not what we have right now. And the result is not just gridlock, but it's actually a little more destructive than that.

I mean, the shutdown cost this country money. It was bad for business. It was bad for families. And yet it still happened. Default would have been worse, could have triggered a financial crisis worse than the one we had in 2008. And yet that was a real possibility.

The only way that we can realign our politics so that it matches up with the decency and goodness of the American people is if elections matter and we're able to both deliver a message and organize ourselves so that folks who aren't acting responsibly pay a consequence and that we're lifting up and rewarding candidates who are serious about the challenges this country faces and are willing to work together in a spirit that is constructive in order to deliver for the American people.

So that's what 2012 was about, and that's what 2014 was about, and I suspect that's what 2016 is going to be about. And I have to say that I'm a proud Democrat and am committed to the values that the Democratic Party represents, but I'm also interested in getting the Republican Party back in a functioning state. Because this country has two parties, and we need both of them operating in a way that allows us to move forward.

And I think that will eventually happen. Voters have an ability, I think, to help parties self-correct, although sometimes, it takes more than one cycle to do it. But in the meantime, we can't just be standing still.

So on issues like immigration reform, where we know we've got a bipartisan consensus and the majority of the people support it and we've already passed it through the Senate, Michael Bennet worked with folks like Marco Rubio and John McCain and Jeff Flake, Republicans who recognize we've got a broken system and we need to fix it. On issues like early childhood education, where some of the reddest States in the country are making these investments and doing the right thing, there's no reason why that should be a partisan issue.

On issues like rebuilding our infrastructure, putting people back to work right now, medical research that can provide cures to things like cancer and Alzheimer's, these are all areas where we should be able to get things done. But that's going to require that not only we maintain a Democratic Senate, but also that we send a message that empowers some of the more commonsense Republicans to do the right thing.

So I'm optimistic that over the long term, Washington starts working better, but I've got to tell you, it's not going to happen unless we've got a strong showing in this election. And you can't ignore the short term because, for example, Supreme Court Justices, Federal bench decisions that ultimately are going to be made about women's reproductive health, about how we treat our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, those are decisions that are going to be made based on my ability to nominate qualified candidates and make sure that we can get them through.

So this is important. This counts. But you know that; otherwise, you wouldn't be here. So I just want to say thank you for everything you've already done, but I want to remind everybody the work is not yet done. We've got a long way to go. And I'm confident we'll get there, but we're going to need your help.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:53 p.m. at the residence of Russell W. and Dorothy A. Budd. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Prevent Employment Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons
November 7, 2013

For more than two centuries, the story of our Nation has been the story of more citizens realizing the rights and freedoms that are our birthright as Americans. Today a bipartisan majority in the Senate took another important step in this journey by passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would help end the injustice of our fellow Americans being denied a job or fired just because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Just as no one in the United States can lose their job simply because of their race, gender, religion, or a disability, no one should ever lose their job simply because of who they are or who they love.

Today's victory is a tribute to all those who fought for this progress ever since a similar bill was introduced after the Stonewall riots more than three decades ago. In particular, I thank Majority Leader Reid, Chairman Harkin, Senators Merkley and Collins for their leadership, and Senator Kirk for speaking so eloquently in support of this legislation. Now it's up to the House of Representatives. This bill has the overwhelming support of the American people, including a majority of Republican voters, as well as many corporations, small businesses, and faith communities. They recognize that our country will be more just and more prosperous when we harness the God-given talents of every individual.

One party in one House of Congress should not stand in the way of millions of Americans who want to go to work each day and simply be judged by the job they do. Now is the time to end this kind of discrimination in the workplace, not enable it. I urge the House Republican leadership to bring this bill to the floor for a vote and send it to my desk so I can sign it into law. On that day, our Nation will take another historic step toward fulfilling the founding ideals that define us as Americans.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 815.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Weapons of Mass Destruction
November 7, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within the 90-day period prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency with respect to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that was declared in Executive Order 12938, as amended, is to continue in effect for 1 year beyond November 14, 2013.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Port of New Orleans in New Orleans, Louisiana
November 8, 2013

The President. Hello, Big Easy! Everybody, give it up for Nancy for that great introduction. It is good to be back in New Orleans. I can't—this is what passes for winter here in New Orleans, huh? [*Laughter*] Folks got all their coats on and all that. Come on. You need to go to Chicago to know what it's like to be cold.

It is great to be here. It is especially happy for my staff. They love coming to New Orleans. But we did schedule the event early because I figured there's a limit to how much trouble they could get into. [*Laughter*] They can't get over to Bourbon Street fast enough if we did a daytime event. And I know that there are probably a couple of my staff that are LSU fans. I wouldn't mind staying for the game tomorrow night. I know we've got the president here; I just saw him a minute ago, and I wished him all the best.

I also want to acknowledge a couple of other people who are here. You've got your Governor, Bobby Jindal is here. We've got the Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, who is here. We have Cedric Richmond, your outstanding Congressman. Cedric then brought down a whole bunch of his colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus for some important work that they're doing, not that they're going to enjoy themselves at all while they're here. [*Laughter*] But we are thrilled to see them all here.

You have one of the best mayors in the country in Mitch Landrieu. And I just flew down with your Senator, who, by coincidence, has the same name: Mary Landrieu. She's traveling around the State today and doing unbelievable work on behalf of the people of Louisiana. And I just want to say, nobody is a tougher advocate on behalf of the working people of Louisiana than Mary Landrieu. So we're very, very proud of the work that she does.

Now, finally, I want to thank Mr. Larry—Gary LaGrange, Keith Palmisano, and Chris Hammond. They showed me around the port. And this is one of the—by the way, anybody who's got a seat, feel free. I noticed that a few folks are standing up. If you don't have a seat, then keep on standing. I don't want you hurting yourself.

This is one of the busiest port complexes in the entire world. You move millions of tons of steel and chemicals and fuel and food every single year. I just found out, you also handle a lot of the country's coffee, which means you're responsible for keeping the White House awake at all times. [*Applause*] Got some coffee folks here. [*Laughter*]

And in so many ways, this port is representative of what ports all around the country do: They help to keep our economy going: moving products, moving people, making sure that businesses are working. You've got corn and wheat that's coming down from my home State of Illinois down the river, ending up here, and then going all around the world. And it's part of the reason why we've been able to increase exports so rapidly, is because we've got some of the best natural resources and waterways and facilities in the world.

Now, growing our economy, creating new jobs, helping middle class families regain a sense of stability and security so they can find good jobs and make sure that their kids are doing even better than they did—now, that's always been what America is about. But for too many people, that sense that you can make it here if you try, that sense has been slipping away. And my driving focus has been to restore that sense of security, and it should be Washington's focus, regardless of party. That's what everybody in Washington should be thinking about every day.

So today I want to just offer a couple of ideas about what we could do right now together that would help our economy, right now. Now, the good news is, over the past 44 months, our businesses have created 7.8 million new jobs. Since I took office, we've cut the deficits in half. [*Applause*] That's right. By the way, you wouldn't know this sometimes listening to folks on TV, but the deficits are going down, they're not going up. They've been cut

in half. And they are—they keep on going down.

Over the past 3 years, health care costs have risen at the slowest pace on record. Exports are up. The housing market is up. The American auto industry is roaring back. So we've got a lot of good things to build on, but we've got a lot more work to do. And what we should start doing—the first thing we should do—is stop doing things that undermine our businesses and our economy over the past few years, this constant cycle of manufactured crises and self-inflicted wounds that have been coming out of Washington.

For example, we learned yesterday that over the summer, our economy grew at its fastest pace in a year. That's the good news. The bad news is that the very day that the economic quarter ended, some folks in Washington decided to shut down the Government and threatened to default on America's obligations for the first time in more than 200 years. And it's like, the gears of our economy, every time they are just about to take off, suddenly, somebody taps the brakes and says, not so fast.

Audience member. Tell it! [*Laughter*]

The President. Now, our businesses are resilient. We've got great workers. And so, as a consequence, we added about 200,000 new jobs last month. But there's no question that the shutdown harmed our jobs market. The unemployment rate still ticked up. And we don't yet know all the data for this second—this final quarter of the year, but it could be down because of what happened in Washington. Now, that makes no sense. These self-inflicted wounds don't have to happen. They should not happen again.

We should not be injuring ourselves every few months, we should be investing in ourselves. We should be building, not tearing things down. Rather than refighting the same old battles again and again and again, we should be fighting to make sure everybody who works hard in America and hard right here in New Orleans, that they have a chance to get ahead. That's what we should be focused on.

Which brings me to one of the reasons I'm here at this port. One of the things we should be focused on is helping more businesses sell more products to the rest of the world. And the only way those products get out is through facilities like this. Right now exports are one of the brightest spots in our economy. Thanks in part to new trade deals that we signed with countries like Panama and Colombia and South Korea, we now export more goods and services than ever before. And that means jobs right here in the United States of America.

Last year, every $1 billion in exports supports nearly 5,000 jobs, including jobs right here at this port. So we're working on new trade deals that will mean more jobs for our workers and more business for ports like this one.

And by the way, I—when I travel around the world, I'm out there selling. I'll go anywhere in the world to make sure that those products stamped with those words "Made in America," that we can open up those markets and sell them anywhere.

So helping American businesses grow, creating more jobs—these are not Democratic or Republican priorities, they are priorities that everybody, regardless of party, should be able to get behind. And that's why, in addition to working with Congress to grow our exports, I've put forward additional ideas where I believe Democrats and Republicans can join together to make progress right now.

Number one, Congress needs to pass a farm bill that helps rural communities grow and protects vulnerable Americans. For decades, Congress found a way to compromise and pass farm bills without fuss. For some reason, now Congress can't even get that done. Now, this is not something that just benefits farmers. Ports like this one depend on all the products coming down the Mississippi. So let's do the right thing: Pass a farm bill. We can start selling more products. That's more business for this port. And that means more jobs right here.

Number two, we should fix our broken immigration system. This would be good for our national security, but it would also be good for our economic security. Over the next two decades, it would grow our economy by $1.4 trillion. It would shrink our deficits by nearly a

trillion dollars. This is—this should not be a partisan issue. President Bush proposed the broad outlines of commonsense immigration reform almost a decade ago. When I was in the Senate, I joined 23 of my Republican colleagues to back those reforms. This year, the Senate has already passed a bill with broad bipartisan support.

So all we're doing now is waiting for the House to act. I don't know what the holdup is. But if there's a good reason not to do it, I haven't heard it. There's no reason both parties can't come together: Get this done this year. [*Applause*] Get it done this year.

Number three, Democrats and Republicans should work together on a responsible budget that sets America on a stronger course for the future. We shouldn't get caught up in the same old fights. And we shouldn't just cut things just for the sake of cutting things. Remember, I want to remind you: What's happening to the deficits? They're going down. They're shrinking. They're falling faster than they have in 60 years.

So what we have to do now is do what America has always done: make some wise investments in our people and in our country that will help us grow over the long term. We should close wasteful tax loopholes that don't help our jobs, don't grow our economy, and then invest that money in things that actually do create jobs and grow our economy. And one of those things is building new roads and bridges and schools and ports. That creates jobs. It puts people to work during the construction phase. And then it creates an infrastructure for our economy to succeed moving forward.

Educating our kids, training our workers so they're prepared for the global economy, that helps us grow. We should be investing in that. And Mayor Landrieu has been doing a great job in improving education here in New Orleans.

Investing in science and research and technology, that keeps our businesses and our military at our cutting edge. That's the kind of investment we should be making.

I mean, think about our infrastructure. In today's global economy, businesses are going to take root and grow wherever there's the fastest, most reliable transportation and communications networks; they can go anywhere. So China is investing a whole lot in infrastructure. Europe is investing a whole lot in infrastructure. And Brazil is investing a whole lot in infrastructure. What are we doing?

We're doing some good things locally here. The State and city are trying to do some work, but nationally, we're falling behind. We're relying on old stuff. I don't think we should have just old stuff, we should have some new stuff that is going to help us grow and keep pace with global competition.

Rebuilding our transportation and communications networks is one of the fastest ways to create good jobs. And consider that just a couple of years from now, we're going to have new supertankers that are going to start coming through the Panama Canal, and these tankers can hold three times as much cargo as today's. If a port can't handle those supertankers, they'll go load and unload cargo somewhere else. So there's work that we can start doing in terms of dredging and making the passageways deeper, which means the supertankers can have more stuff on them, which means they can unload and load more stuff, which makes this port more competitive.

So why wouldn't we put people to work upgrading them? Why wouldn't we do that? It's not just our ports either. One in nine of our bridges is rated structurally deficient. More than 40 percent of our major highways are congested; so is our airspace. Everybody who's sitting on a tarmac wondering why it is that you're not taking off and getting aggravated when you go fly someplace, part of the reason is, we've got this antiquated air traffic control system. We need the next-generation air traffic control system. It would reduce time travel; it would reduce delays. It reduces fuel costs for airlines. It reduces pollution in the sky. We know how to do it, we just haven't done it.

That shouldn't be a Democratic or a Republican issue. That's just smart to go ahead and do it, something that people across the political spectrum should be able to agree on. Now, here's the thing: All these opportunities and

challenges, they're not going to magically fix themselves. We've got to do it. And anybody who says we can't afford to pay for these things needs to realize we're already paying for them.

I'll give you an example. A lot of trucking companies now reroute their shipments to avoid traffic and unsafe bridges. So they're going longer than they need to; that costs them money. So you're paying for it. Those costs then get passed on to consumers. Or it means companies aren't making as much of a profit and maybe they've got fewer employees. So directly or indirectly, we're paying for it. And the longer we delay, the more we'll pay.

So the sooner we take care of business, the better. And I know that if there's one thing that Members of Congress from both parties want, it's smart infrastructure projects that create good jobs in their district.

So that's why, last year, I took the step—without Congress—to speed up the permitting process for big infrastructure projects like upgrading our ports. Just cut through the redtape, get it done faster. This year, rebuilding our infrastructure could be part of a bipartisan budget deal. A couple months ago, I put forward an idea to try to break through some of the old arguments, a grand bargain for middle class jobs. And what I said was, we'll simplify our corporate Tax Code, close some—close wasteful tax loopholes, end incentives to ship jobs overseas, lower tax rates for businesses that create jobs here in the United States, and use some of the money we save by switching to a smarter tax system to create good construction jobs building the things that our businesses need right here in America. It's a pretty sensible deal.

So we—if we took that step, we could modernize our air traffic control system to keep planes running on time, modernize our power grids and pipelines so they survive storms, modernize our schools to prepare our kids for jobs of the future, modernize our ports so they can accommodate the new ships.

Point is, rebuilding our infrastructure or educating our kids, funding basic research—they are not partisan issues, they're American issues. There used to be a broad consensus that these things were important to our economy. And we've got to get back to that mindset. We've got to move forward on these things together. It doesn't mean that there aren't going to be disagreements on a whole bunch of stuff, but let's work on the things we agree on.

Now, I'm going to make one last point. One area where we haven't made much bipartisan progress—at least not as much as I'd like—is fixing our broken health care system. And I took up this cause knowing it was hard—there was a reason why no other President had done it—to make sure every American has access to quality, affordable health care and to make sure that no American ever again has to fear one illness is going to bankrupt them.

And the work we've already done has resulted in, over the past 3 years, health care costs rising at the slowest pace on record. Health care costs for businesses are growing about one-third of the rate they were a decade ago, and we want those trends to continue.

Now, we've had this problem with the website. I'm not happy about that. But we're working overtime to make sure that it gets fixed, because right now we've put in place a system, a marketplace, where people can get affordable health care plans. I promise you, nobody has been more frustrated. I wanted to go in and fix it myself, but I don't write code, so—[*laughter*].

But to every American with a preexisting condition who's been waiting for the day they could be covered just like everybody else, for folks who couldn't afford to buy their own insurance because they don't get it on the job, we're going to fix the website. Because the insurance plans are there. They are good, and millions of Americans are already finding that they'll gain better coverage for less cost, and it's the right thing to do.

Now, I know that's—I know health care is controversial, so there's only going to be so much support we get on that on a bipartisan basis; until it's working really well, and then they're going to stop calling it Obamacare. [*Laughter*] They're going to call it something else.

One thing, though, I was talking to your mayor and your Governor about, though, is a

separate issue, which is, one of the things that the Affordable Care Act does is allow States to expand Medicaid to cover more of their citizens.

And here in Louisiana, that would benefit about 265,000 people. And already, you've seen States—Arkansas has covered—taken this up, and they're covering almost 14 percent of their uninsured. Republican Governors in States like Ohio and Nevada, Arizona, they're doing it too. Oregon has already reduced the number of uninsured by about 10 percent. And some of these folks opposed Obamacare, but they did support helping their citizens who can't get coverage.

So we want to work with everybody—mayor, Governor, insurance—whoever it is that wants to work with us here in Louisiana to make sure that even if you don't support the overall plan, let's at least go ahead and make sure that the folks who don't have health insurance right now and can get it through an expanded Medicaid. Let's make sure we do that. [*Applause*] It's the right thing to do.

And one of the reasons to do it is—I've said this before; sometimes, people don't fully appreciate it—we already pay for the health care of people who don't have health insurance, we just pay for the most expensive version, which is when they go to the emergency room. Because what happens is, the hospitals have to take sick folk. They're not just going to leave them on the streets. But people who are sick, they wait till the very last minute. It's much more expensive to treat them. Hospitals have to figure out how to get their money back, which means, they jack up costs for everybody who does have health insurance by about a thousand dollars per family.

So, as a consequence, what happens is, you're already paying a hidden tax for a broken health care system. Community hospitals struggle to care for the uninsured who can't pay their bills when they get sick. So it's the right thing to do for the health of our economies as a whole. It is a practical, pragmatic reason to do it. It has nothing to do with politics or ideology. And the more States that are working together—Democrats and Republicans—the better off we're going to be.

So bottom line is, New Orleans, we can work together to do these things, because we've done them before. We did not become the greatest nation on Earth just by chance, just by accident. We had some advantages: really nice real estate here in the United States. But what we also had were people who, despite their differences—and we come from everywhere and look different and have different traditions—we understand that this country works best when we're working together. And we decided to do what was necessary for our businesses and our families to succeed. And if we did it in the past, we can do it again.

So let's make it easier for more businesses to expand and grow and sell more goods made in America to the rest of the world. Let's make sure we've got the best ports and roads and bridges and schools. Let's make sure our young people are getting a great education. Let's give everybody a chance to get ahead, not just a few at the top, but everybody, because if we do that, if we help our businesses grow and our communities thrive and our children reach a little higher, then the economy is going to grow faster.

We'll rebuild our middle class stronger. The American Dream will be real and achievable: not just for a few, but for everybody; not just today, but for decades to come. That's what we're fighting for. That's what you're all about here at this port and here in New Orleans. And I'm looking forward to working with you to make sure we keep that up. All right?

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. at the Nashville Avenue Break Bulk Terminal. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Richard, employee, and Gary P. LaGrange, president and chief executive officer, Port of New Orleans; F. King Alexander, president and chancellor, Louisiana State University; Keith Palmisano, general manager, Ports America Louisiana; Christopher Hammond, stevedore, International Longshoremen's Association;

former President George W. Bush; Gov. John R. Kasich of Ohio; Gov. Brian E. Sandoval of Nevada; and Gov. Janice K. Brewer of Arizona.

Statement on the Resignation of Heather R. Zichal as Deputy Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change
November 8, 2013

For more than 5 years, I have been fortunate to have Heather Zichal as a trusted adviser. She crafted my energy and climate change agenda in the 2008 campaign, then again on my Presidential transition, and as my top energy and climate adviser at the White House, she has been a strong and steady voice for policies that reduce America's dependence on foreign oil, protect public health and our environment, and combat the threat of global climate change.

Heather has overseen some of our biggest achievements in energy and climate change, including establishing historic new fuel economy standards that save consumers money, reducing mercury pollution from power plants to keep our kids safe, supporting the growth of homegrown clean energy that creates good new jobs, and enacting my Climate Action Plan that will help us leave a safer planet for our children. Above all, Heather's efforts have proven that strengthening America's energy security does not have to be a choice between economic growth or good environmental stewardship, it can mean both. I am grateful for Heather's service, and I wish her the best in her next endeavors.

Statement on the 75th Anniversary of Kristallnacht
November 8, 2013

I join millions of people in the United States and around the world in marking the 75th anniversary of the tragedy of Kristallnacht, "the Night of Broken Glass." On November 9 and 10, 1938, Nazi paramilitaries marched under the cover of darkness throughout the towns and villages of Germany and Austria smashing Jewish storefronts, arresting Jewish men en masse, ransacking Jewish homes, burning books, and littering the streets with the parchment of sacred Judaic texts. Throughout the 2-day wave of violence, hundreds of synagogues and thousands of businesses owned by Jews were destroyed or damaged. At least 91 Jews were killed, while another 30,000 were sent to concentration camps.

Kristallnacht foreshadowed the systematic slaughter of 6 million Jews and millions of other innocent victims. Seventy-five years later, Kristallnacht now signifies the tragic consequences of silence in the face of unmitigated hatred.

As we mark this anniversary, let us act in keeping with the lessons of that dark night by speaking out against anti-Semitism and intolerance, standing up to indifference, and recommitting ourselves to combating prejudice and persecution wherever it exists. In so doing, we honor the memories of those killed and reaffirm that timeless call: "Never again."

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Pinecrest, Florida
November 8, 2013

Wow, if Jorge wasn't so good at business, we might have to run him for something—[*laughter*]—because I was inspired just listening to him. To Jorge and Aleyda and the entire Mas

family, thank you so much for the incredible hospitality in this beautiful setting and to all of you who are here.

Everything that Jorge said is true, and I remember as if it was yesterday, although, we noted that both of us have gotten a little grayer since the first time we met. [*Laughter*] When I first met Jorge, I was obviously the underdog in a Presidential campaign. And I had taken a deep interest in Florida and a deep interest in Cuban politics. But the truth is, I hadn't had occasion to campaign a lot in Florida, with the exception of making sure that Florida reelected one of the finest Senators we have in this country, Bill Nelson, who is here tonight.

But one of the things I was confident about was, given my history and concern on issues of freedom, democracy, civil society, my own background as a grassroots organizer, that the policies that the United States pursued would be ones that would focus on the idea of liberty and how do we build that from the bottom up. And Jorge immediately was able to share with me his vision and his views. And as a consequence, we were in a position, I think, to make changes that empowered, that opened the possibility of greater penetration and contact from Cuban families here in remittances and in travel.

And we've started to see changes on the island. Now, I think we all understand that, ultimately, freedom in Cuba will come because of extraordinary activists and the incredible courage of folks like we see here today. But the United States can help, and we have to be creative, and we have to be thoughtful. And we have to continue to update our policies. Keep in mind that when Castro came to power, I was just born. So the notion that the same policies that we put in place in 1961 would somehow still be as effective as they are today in the age of the Internet and Google and world travel doesn't make sense.

And I think that partly because we're of the same generation, we recognize that the aims are always going to be the same. And what we have to do is to continually find new mechanisms and new tools to speak out on behalf of the issues that we care so deeply about.

Now, as Jorge mentioned, he is also a great businessman. And his family has a great tradition of business in this country. And the energy sector is one that is an enormous advantage for the United States. We're starting to see changes in geopolitics, in part because of the incredible production of both traditional energy sources and new energy sources. It's interesting. I was having a meeting with the Central American leaders when I was in Costa Rica. And the single thing they wanted to talk most about was energy and how could the United States help them on their energy costs. And that gives you a sense of why the kind of smart public policies combined with outstanding entrepreneurs and business leaders like Jorge can make an enormous difference in our position in the world over the long term.

Now, I wish that I could say that Washington always runs on the basis of common sense. But Washington is a political place. And what we've seen over the last several years is a constant ratcheting up of partisanship that prevents us from moving forward on things that, I think, most people would say aren't Democrat or Republican ideas. They're just good, commonsense, American ideas. Energy independence is one of them; making sure that we're investing in the best schools so that our children can compete in this new global economy; rebuilding our infrastructure, not just our energy infrastructure, but our ports and our roads and our bridges and our air traffic control systems so that we stay on the cutting edge; making sure we're investing in research and development. Those are all things that are critically important and should not be the subject of ideological debates.

Unfortunately, what we've seen is, again and again, those efforts blocked. And in fact, sometimes, what we've seen is, Washington hurt our economy instead of helping, most recently with the shutdown and the threat that for the first time in over 200 years, America wouldn't pay its debts.

So we have a whole drawer full of good ideas. And some of them I can do on my own, administratively. But ultimately, I've got to have a Congress that is prepared to move for-

ward, to work on those issues where we agree, even as we understand there are some issues where we're going to disagree. And that's why you being here tonight is so important.

One of my favorite people and one of the finest public officials that we have in this country is here tonight: Michael Bennet. He is the Senator from Colorado. And Michael has the thankless job of traveling all around the country and raising money and recruiting candidates on behalf of the Democratic Senate Committee. And I have to tell you that when Michael and I—we traveled down to Dallas together just a couple of days ago—we both sat there, and we agreed that the horizon and the possibilities are limitless for the United States in this next generation.

We are better positioned than any country on Earth to succeed in the 21st century, just like we were in the 20th century. But the only way it's going to happen is if we solve some of the political dysfunction that exists in Washington. And that's where you come in, because we can't make it happen without you. And that's why I'm so grateful to Jorge for the support that he has provided.

I'll give you just one specific example to indicate what can happen if we focus not on the next election, but we focus on the next generation. We've been talking about immigration reform for decades now. Almost a decade ago, my predecessor, George W. Bush, said that comprehensive immigration reform that would strengthen our borders, improve our legal immigration system, and do something about those who are here on an undocumented basis, that that would be good for the economy. And it was embraced by a large number of Republicans as well as Democrats.

We have seen the Senate most recently—Michael Bennet was part of a group, bipartisan group, that helped to pass a comprehensive bill that we know would add over a trillion dollars of economic growth to our country, would reduce our deficit by $800 million, is supported by law enforcement, clergy, business, immigration rights activists. And right now it's being held up. It's being held up not because it's not a good idea. The majority of the American people support it. It's being held up because there's a small faction in the other party that has decided we don't want to do anything and our main goal is obstruction.

The only way we can continue to place pressure to get that bill done is by making sure that the other side, or at least that small faction on the other side, understands there's a price to pay when you don't act on the basis of the interests of the American people. And so that's something that I hope we can still get done by the end of this year.

And by the way, if the Republicans decided to pass it—and nobody would be happier than me, even though it would be to their political advantage to do it, because ultimately, I've run my last election. And along with the gray hair, what comes with being President is that you take the long view and you start thinking about 10 years from now or 20 years from now or 30 years from now.

And when I'm, hopefully, playing with some grandkids, but not too soon—[*laughter*]—because Malia and Sasha are only 15 and 12, I want to know that what I did made the world a better place for them. I want them to know that because of the decisions we made now, we're more energy independent and that we're improving our environment. I want them to know that not just they and their friends got a great education, but children all across America got a great education. I want them to know that the same liberty and freedom that they enjoy here is enjoyed in other parts of the world, including Cuba.

That's what motivates me. That's what gets me up every day. I want to make sure that I'm delivering for them. And I know Jorge feels the same way. And I know all of you feel the same way. That's what we're fighting for. That's what this is about.

And so I know that sometimes politics seems messy and ugly. And sometimes, it can be discouraging. And the path of progress typically involves two steps forward and then one step back. And it doesn't always move in a straight line. That's true for those who are still fighting for their freedom. That's true for those who already enjoy their freedom. But what I'm

confident about is, if we stay persistent and we keep our eye on the prize, that we'll get to where we need to go.

And I'm just grateful to all of you for joining us in this process. And I want you to know that if we've got Senators like Bill Nelson in our Senate and Michael Bennet in our Senate, then that's going to help me deliver on the promises that I've made.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. at the residence of Jorge Mas Santos and Aleyda Mas. In his remarks, he referred to former President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Pinecrest

November 8, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Well, I told Leslie we should all just jump in the pool. [*Laughter*] But she thought that might not be appropriate. I just want to say to Leslie and her remarkable children, thank you so much for the hospitality and the support.

Two other people I want to acknowledge: first of all, your Senator, one of the finest public servants we know, Mr. Bill Nelson. By the way, Bill, did you see "Gravity"?

Senator C. William Nelson. It is terrific.

The President. It is terrific. But I need to get a sense of what astronauts think about it. I always told Bill that I was mildly impressed that he was a U.S. Senator, much more impressed that he was an astronaut—[*laughter*]—and just a great public servant. The other person I want to make sure I acknowledge is somebody who has the thankless job of recruiting great candidates and helping to make sure that we maintain a democratic majority in the Senate. He is a wonderful friend and somebody—by the way, Leslie—who used to be superintendent of schools and transformed the Denver school system. That's how I first met and knew him. He is a wonderful man, Mr. Michael Bennet.

So I'm going to keep the remarks very brief because I just want to spend most of the time interacting, getting questions and suggestions. We've gone through enormous challenges over the last 4 or 5 years: the worst recession since the Great Depression, oil leaks in the Gulf, transformative changes taking place throughout the Middle East, challenges around how we build an economy that works for everybody, the need to transform our education system, the challenges of climate change. And as a consequence, I think sometimes people are worried about what's the future for our kids going to be like. Are we going to be able to pass on to them the same incredible opportunities that a lot of us enjoyed as we were coming up?

And the main message I want to deliver to everybody is, I have never been more optimistic about America's possibilities for the future. The 21st century is one in which our wheelhouse, our skillset is perfectly adapted. In a global, interconnected world, we're the most innovative people on Earth. We've got the most entrepreneurial spirit of anybody on Earth. We've got incredible natural resources and energy. We have the best universities on Earth, a community college system that is underappreciated in terms of how we can train and create new skills for folks, the best workers in the world.

We've got a lot of stuff going for us. Lately, the one thing that's been holding us back is our Government and the seeming incapacity for people to come together and move forward on commonsense solutions. We've seen recent examples of that. Just as the economy keeps on trying to get traction, we have threats of shutdown and then shutdown and then threats of default, all of which dampens business enthusiasm and retards our ability to create more good jobs.

Immigration reform—Michael Bennet, Bill Nelson and others supported a bipartisan, comprehensive effort to move a bill forward that would transform our economy, cut our deficit, give young people opportunity and attract the best and the brightest. Right now it's stalled because of politics. We saw tragic deaths in Sandy Hook, Newtown. And the majority of the American people agreed that we could have some commonsense legislation that would prevent people with mental illnesses, criminals from purchasing weapons. That stalled because of politics.

Here in Florida, we have the possibility of making sure that over a million people who don't have health insurance could get it right now and wouldn't have to go through a website. We're working on that, but in the meantime, Medicaid expansion is something that you've already seen a number of States have done. And right away, you've got hundreds of thousands of people who have health insurance that didn't have it before. We could be doing it right now. It's not happening because of politics.

And so the challenge that we have is how do we get the wisdom and common sense and hard work of the American people reflected in our political process? And look, I'm a Democrat. So, obviously, I'm a little biased here. But I don't claim that Democrats have all the answers or that we're perfect. But I will say that if you just looked objectively at what the Democratic Party and Democratic Senators stand for right now, it's a lot more aligned with what the American people believe and what they care about than what a small faction of the other party is trying to promote.

And I'm confident that there's going to be an adjustment process where the Republican Party, kind of, moves back to reason and common sense. But they're only going to do it if our politics is reflected—or elections reflect that common sense. And if they're rewarded for cooperation and it—when they aren't looking out for the interests of the American people, there are some consequences. And that's why elections matter. That's why they count.

Those of you who care about whether judges are going to protect our core freedoms, including women's ability to control their own health care decisions, that's going to depend on whether or not Bill Nelson and Michael Bennet and others still stay in the majority. Whether we're going to be able to deal with climate change in a serious way, that's going to depend on whether Bill Nelson and Michael Bennet are still in the majority. So what you're doing here matters a lot.

And I just want you to know that, because I know a lot of you around the table, I know you're already—you've worked on behalf of me in the past. I've run my last election. But my capacity to do what needs to be done over the next 3 years is going to be dependent on having a great team in Washington. And that's what we're going to be fighting for over the next several months, at the same time as we're fighting to govern in a way that delivers for middle class families and working families all across the country. They deserve a Government that works for them. That's what I want to provide. And I know that's what Bill and Michael, all the candidates that Michael has recruited, want to provide as well.

So thank you for being here, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:29 p.m. at the residence of Leslie Miller Saiontz. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
November 9, 2013

Hello, everybody. Veterans Day weekend is a chance for all of us to say two simple words: "Thank you." Thank you to that greatest generation who fought island by island across the Pacific and freed millions from fascism in Europe. Thank you to the heroes who risked everything through the bitter cold of Korea and the stifling heat of Vietnam. And thank you to

all the heroes who have served since, most recently our 9/11 generation of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now that more of them are coming home, we need to serve them as well as they serve us, and that requires more than a simple thank you, especially from those of us who've been elected to serve.

I've often said that my top priority is growing the economy, creating new jobs, and restoring middle class security. And a very important part of that is making sure that every veteran has every chance to share in the opportunity he or she has helped defend. In addition to the care and benefits they've earned—including good mental health care to stay strong—that means a good job, a good education, and a home to call their own.

If you fight for your country overseas, you should never have to fight for a job when you come home. I've made sure the Federal Government leads by example, and since I took office, we've hired about 300,000 veterans to keep serving their country. Our new transition assistance program is helping veterans and their spouses find that new job and plan their career. And I'm going to keep calling on Congress to do the right thing and pass the veterans jobs corps. Put our veterans to work rebuilding America.

Our troops gain unmatched skills while serving in harm's way. So we're also doing everything we can to connect more businesses with highly skilled veterans: more help with job searches, more tools to connect veterans to job openings, more chances to earn licenses and credentials for civilian jobs, and new tax credits for companies that hire veterans and wounded warriors, tax credits which Congress should make permanent.

And America's businesses have worked with Michelle and Jill Biden's Joining Forces campaign to help returning heroes find jobs in the private sector. They've already hired or trained 290,000 veterans and military spouses, and they've committed to hiring over 400,000 more.

We're also committed to giving today's veterans and their families the same shot at a great education this country gave my grandfather when he came home from World War II. We're helping more of them earn their degrees under the post-9/11 GI bill. We've worked with thousands of schools across the country to set new standards to protect against dishonest recruiting and predatory lending practices that target our veterans. And we're helping hundreds of community colleges and universities do more to welcome and encourage our veterans on campus.

Thanks to these efforts and the efforts of the private sector, we've made progress getting our vets back to work. But we've got a lot more to do. And as more than a million of our troops return to civilian life, we're going to have to work even harder. Because the skill, dedication, and courage of our troops is unmatched, and when they come home, we all benefit from their efforts to build a stronger America and a brighter future for our kids.

So to all our veterans, on behalf our entire Nation, thank you for everything you've done and will continue to do for our country. As your Commander in Chief, I'm proud of your service and grateful for your sacrifice. And as long as I'm your President, I will make it my mission to make sure that America has your back, not just on one day or one weekend, but 365 days a year.

Thanks. God bless you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:10 p.m. on November 7 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast on November 9. In the address, the President referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 9.

Statement on Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)
November 10, 2013

Michelle and I are deeply saddened by the loss of life and extensive damage done by Super Typhoon Yolanda. But I know the incredible resiliency of the Philippine people, and I am confident that the spirit of *bayanihan* will see you through this tragedy. The United States is already providing significant humanitarian assistance, and we stand ready to further assist the Government's relief and recovery efforts. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the millions of people affected by this devastating storm.

NOTE: The statement referred to Typhoon Haiyan as Typhoon Yolanda, the name assigned to it by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

Remarks at a Veterans Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
November 11, 2013

The President. Thank you. Please be seated. Good morning, everyone.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Thank you, Secretary Shinseki, for your lifetime of service to our Nation and for being a tireless advocate on behalf of America's veterans, including your fellow Vietnam veterans. To Vice President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden; Secretaries Hagel and Perez; Admiral Winnefeld; Major General Buchanan; most of all, to our outstanding veteran service organizations, our men and women in uniform, and to the proud veterans and family members joining us in this sacred place: Michelle and I are incredibly honored to be with you all here today again.

To the Gold Star families and the brothers- and sisters-in-arms who walk the paths of these hallowed grounds and the cemeteries around the world, we join you as you remember your loved ones who wore America's uniform. And here at Arlington and Section 60, we've ensured that you can continue to bring the small mementos of your love and affection to the final resting place of these American heroes.

Today we gather once more to honor patriots who have rendered the highest service any American can offer this Nation: those who fought for our freedom and stood sentry for our security. On this hillside of solemn remembrance and in veterans halls and in proud parades across America, we join as one people to honor a debt we can never fully repay.

In the life of our Nation, across every generation, there are those who stand apart. They step up, they raise their hands, they take that oath, they put on the uniform, and they put their lives on the line. They do this so that the rest of us might live in a country and a world that is safer, freer, and more just. This is the gift they've given us. This is the debt that we owe them.

They fought on a green at Lexington so that we could make independent the country they imagined. They fought on the fields of Gettysburg so that we could make whole a nation torn asunder. They fought on the beaches of Europe and across Pacific islands. And from their sacrifice we emerged the strongest and most prosperous nation in the history of the world. And this year, as we mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the fighting in Korea, we pay special tribute to all those who served in the Korean war.

From the jungles of Vietnam to Desert Storm, to the mountains of the Balkans, they have answered America's call. And since America was attacked on that clear September morning, millions more have assumed that mantle, defining one of the greatest generations of military service this country has ever produced.

On tour after tour after tour in Iraq and Afghanistan, this generation—the 9/11 generation—has met every mission we have asked of them. And today we can say that because of their heroic service, the core of Al Qaida is on the path to defeat, our Nation is more secure, and our homeland is safer.

They're men and women like the soldier—and soon to be veteran—I met a few months ago, Jacare Hogan. Jacare deployed to Iraq twice, and she survived not one, but two—excuse me, three—separate IED explosions. And when she was well enough, she deployed again, this time to Afghanistan, where she was often the only woman at our forward operating bases. She proudly wears the Combat Action Badge. And today, Jacare is committed to helping other wounded warriors recover from the trials of war. "Helping the troops," she says, "is what I'm all about." And, my fellow Americans, that's what we should be all about.

Our work is more urgent than ever, because this chapter of war is coming to an end. Soon, one of the first marines to arrive in Afghanistan 12 years ago, Brigadier General Daniel Yoo, will lead his Camp Pendleton marines as they become one of the last major groups of marines to deploy in this war. And over the coming months, more of our troops will come home. This winter, our troop levels in Afghanistan will be down to 34,000. And by this time next year, the transition to Afghan-led security will be nearly complete. The longest war in American history will end.

As is true after every conflict, there's a risk that the devoted service of our veterans could fade from the forefront of our minds, that we might turn to other things. But part of the reason we're here today is to pledge that we will never forget the profound sacrifices that are made in our name. Today reminds us of our sacred obligations. For even though this time of war is coming to a close, our time of service to our newest veterans has only just begun.

Think about it: Our troops wear the uniform for a time, yet they wear another proud title, the title of "veteran," for decades, for the rest of their lives. As a nation, we make sure we have the best led, best trained, best equipped military in the world. We have to devote just as much energy and passion to making sure we have the best cared for, best treated, best respected veterans in the world.

So when we talk about fulfilling our promises to our veterans, we don't just mean for a few years, we mean now, tomorrow, and forever, and not just for generations past, but for this generation of veterans and all who will follow.

And that's why, as Commander in Chief, I'm going to keep making sure we're providing unprecedented support to our veterans. Even as we make difficult fiscal choices as a nation, we're going to keep making vital investments in our veterans. We're going to keep improving veterans health care, including mental health care so you can stay strong. We're making sure that veterans not covered by the VA can secure quality, affordable health insurance.

We're going to keep reducing the claims backlog. We've slashed it by a third since March, and we're going to keep at it so you can get the benefits that you have earned and that you need, when you need them. We're going to keep helping our newest veterans and their families pursue their education under the post-9/11 GI bill. We just welcomed our 1 millionth student veteran, and we're ready for all those who come next.

And we're going to keep demanding that the rights and dignity of every veteran are upheld, including by pushing for the Disabilities Treaty so that our disabled veterans enjoy the same opportunities to travel and work and study around the world as everybody else. And with the help of Michelle and Dr. Jill Biden and Joining Forces, we're going to keep fighting to give every veteran who has fought for America the chance to pursue the American Dream, a fair shot at the jobs and opportunity you need to help us rebuild and grow here at home. Because you're bringing home the skills and the work ethic and leadership necessary to start companies and serve your communities and take care of your fellow veterans.

And that's our promise to you and all who have served: to be there, to support you, when you come home, every step of the way. And as a nation, we will strive to be worthy of the sac-

rifices that you've made. That's what we owe all our veterans. That's what we owe veterans like Richard Overton, who served in the Army in World War II. He was there, at—[*applause*]—now, everybody, I want you to know a little something about Mr. Overton here. He was there at Pearl Harbor, when the battleships were still smoldering. He was there at Okinawa. He was there at Iwo Jima, where, he said, "I only got out of there by the grace of God."

When the war ended, Richard headed home to Texas to a nation bitterly divided by race. And his service on the battlefield was not always matched by the respect that he deserved at home. But this veteran held his head high. He carried on and lived his life with honor and dignity. He built his wife a house with his own two hands. He went back to work in the furniture business. In time, he served as a courier in the Texas State Capitol, where he worked for four Governors and made more friends than most of us do in a lifetime.

And today, Richard still lives in the house that he built all those years ago. He rakes his own lawn. And every Sunday he hops in his 1971 Ford truck and drives one of the nice ladies in his neighborhood to church. [*Laughter*] So this is the life of one American veteran, living proud and strong in the land he helped keep free.

And earlier this year, the great folks at Honor Flight Austin brought Richard to Washington, DC, for the first time. And he and his fellow veterans paid their respects at the World War II Memorial. And then, they visited the memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. And as Richard sat in a wheelchair beneath that great marble statue, he wept. And the crowd that gathered around him wept too to see one of the oldest living veterans of World War II bear witness to a day—to the progress of a nation—he thought might never come.

Richard Overton, this American veteran, is 107 years old. And we are honored that he's here with us today. So let's ask Richard to stand again, because he can stand.

And this is how we'll be judged: not just by how well we care for our troops in battle, but how we treat them when they come home, and by the America we build together; by what we do with the security and peace that they have helped grant us; by the progress that allows citizens from Richard Overton to Jacare Hogan to play their part in the American story.

Today our message to all those who have ever worn the uniform of this Nation is this: We will stand by your side, whether you're 7 days out or, like Richard, 70 years out. Because here in America, we take care of our own. We honor the sacrifices that has been made in our name, for this Nation that we love. And we commit ourselves to standing by these veterans and their families, for as long as we're blessed to walk this Earth.

God bless you all. God bless our veterans. God bless our men and women in uniform. And God bless these United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Jeffrey S. Buchanan, USA, commanding general, National Capital Region and Military District of Washington; S. Sgt. Jacare Hogan, USA; and Brig. Gen. Daniel Yoo, USMC, commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force.

Remarks on the Nomination of Timothy G. Massad To Be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission
November 12, 2013

The President. All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Have a seat. Well, 5 years ago today, we were in some of the darkest days of one of the worst economic crises in our history. A financial catastrophe on Wall Street was rapidly fueling a punishing recession on Main Street.

We were looking over the horizon and seeing the potential for a Great Depression, not merely a great recession. And so we prepared steps to rescue our economy and put people back to work. But one of our top priorities was also to make sure that a crisis like this never happened again.

And the result was historic Wall Street reform that put in place smarter, tougher, commonsense rules of the road to protect consumers and to end taxpayer-funded bailouts once and for all. Now, 5 years later, our economy is growing. Our businesses are creating jobs. Our markets have hit record highs and there's no doubt, our financial system is more stable. And a big reason for that stability is the work of a small, but mighty independent agency: the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

[*At this point, Commodity Futures Trading Commission Chairman Gary S. Gensler gestured in approval.*]

Was that a little—[*laughter*].

The CFTC has many responsibilities. Under Wall Street reform, one of them is to guard against some of the most reckless and irresponsible practices at the heart of the financial crisis. And this includes making sure big banks can't make risky bets with their customers' deposits, something we call the Volcker rule. It also includes oversight of risky trading in derivatives, some of the complex products that were part of what precipitated the crisis 5 years ago and products that Warren Buffett once called "financial weapons of mass destruction" even before they nearly brought down AIG and sparked the financial wildfire on Wall Street.

So these reforms will protect consumers and make financial systems stronger, more competitive, helping to restore confidence in our markets, confidence that markets around the world depend on. And that's why the CFTC has worked tirelessly to implement these reforms. But they need the resources and the regulators to finish the job, and so that's why we're here today.

When I named Gary Gensler to lead the CFTC, I hadn't even taken office yet. We were about a month and a half into my transition. Our economy was bleeding 800,000 jobs a month. The truth is, nobody knew where the bottom would be. Around that time, Gary sat down with Tim Geithner, who would become my Treasury Secretary, as well as Mary Schapiro, who would become Chairperson of the SEC, and began sketching out on a yellow pad the early outlines of what financial reform would look like. And ever since, Gary has worked tirelessly to make it real.

Gary has one of the smallest budgets of any of the agencies charged with protecting consumers, but he's done as much as anybody to implement financial reform. Under his watch, the CFTC has transformed what was a secretive and shadowy derivatives market by bringing large parts of it onto exchanges to transparent trading. And CFTC is working hand in hand with other agencies to protect consumers by implementing the Volcker rule, which Secretary Lew has called on regulators to complete by the end of the year.

They've successfully imposed nearly $1.8 billion in penalties against financial firms that engaged in rate-fixing schemes. They worked to make sure that an irresponsible few can't hurt consumers by illegally manipulating or rigging energy markets for their own gain. And they've done it all while a swarm of special interest lobbyists have done everything possible to thwart their every move. Gary's never once let his team forget what this is all about: the American people, folks we are so privileged to serve. So before I introduce his successor, please join me in thanking Gary for his outstanding service.

[*As audience members applauded, Chairman Gensler spoke briefly to the President. The President then continued his remarks as follows.*]

Gary, as always a team player, says also a whole bunch of CFTC people are here. We want to congratulate you. My working assumption is a bunch of them will be here even after Tim goes and does whatever he does next, because the next person who is going to be taking over is going to need a whole bunch of outstanding, experienced regulators, some of whom are in this room.

The man I've chosen to succeed Gary at the CFTC is Timothy Massad. And for the past few years, Tim has been charged with—let's face it—the thankless task of winding down a program that no one ever particularly liked, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, also known as TARP. He's quietly been very successful at it. President Bush rightly began this program to stop the downward spiral in late 2008. And we continued that effort, modifying the program to rescue the American auto industry as well.

Now, under Tim's watch, not only have the banks that benefited from TARP repaid nearly every single dollar, but he has secured a positive return of nearly $30 billion to the American taxpayer. He has worked tirelessly to improve TARP programs that help more struggling homeowners stay in their homes, more hard-hit communities remove the blight of vacant homes from their neighborhoods. At the Treasury Department, he has launched new online tools that allow American consumers to track where the funds went and what—when they were repaid. And that's a commitment to transparency and openness that I know that he wants to continue at the CFTC.

Tim started at Treasury as the right-hand man to his predecessor Herb Allison, who passed away earlier this year and was an outstanding CEO as well as a public servant and whose work guiding our financial stability reforms we honor today. Tim was the right man to succeed Herb, and with a record that reflects a deep commitment to a reform agenda, which is why he's the right man to succeed Gary as well. Tim's a guy who doesn't seek the spotlight, but he consistently delivers. He gets a high return for American taxpayers without a lot of fanfare.

I have every confidence that he is the right man to lead an agency designed to prevent future crises, because I think it's safe to say that he never wants to have to manage something like TARP again. [*Laughter*]

And I just found out that his lovely mother skydived on her 80th birthday—[*laughter*]—which to me is just very cool. [*Laughter*] She's very proud of him right now also.

So I urge the Senate to confirm Tim as soon as possible. Let him can get right into the vital work of protecting America's economy and the American people.

And while I'm at it, I would urge Congress to give Tim and the CFTC the resources it needs to do the job. Now, ever since we passed Wall Street reform, its opponents have tried to starve funding for the agencies responsible for carrying it out. The men and women of the CFTC are charged with protecting us from financial harm, but they are undermanned. They are outgunned. They are working overtime. The sequester cuts have made it even harder for them to do their job. They've lost 5 percent of their team this year.

Recently, Gary announced that some have to drop—that they have to drop some open enforcement cases because Congress won't allow them the resources required to do their jobs and complete these cases. Now, I mean, this is like not having enough cops on the beat, not having enough prosecutors to prosecute crimes. This makes us safer. It makes our financial system work better, and it's foolish for us not to adequately resource it.

The Republican leader in the Senate said a while back that the less we fund these agencies, the better America will be. That is just not true. We know that's not true. We've got the scars to prove it, given what happened in 2007 and 2008. And that's why we can't let an army of lobbyists and their allies in Congress delay, defund, dismantle the rules that were designed to protect consumers and protect a crisis from happening again. We can't go back to the days when bad behavior could nearly bring down the entire economy unless taxpayers stepped in to rescue it. And anybody who is working hard to dismantle any of these reforms will have to explain to the American people why they did that when and if a crisis ever does happen again.

Now, it's important to realize that financial reform is not about punishment, it's about making sure that everybody plays by the same set of clear and transparent rules that encourage responsible innovation and competition and discourage fraud and manipulation and,

above all, protect the American people. And these regulations can work when people allow it to work.

Let me just give you one example: One of the things we did was pass a credit card bill of rights that imposed a new standard of fairness, transparency, and accountability on credit card companies. And that means a simpler bill with no more hidden fees, no more shifting deadlines or sudden changes of terms or "any time, any reason" rate hikes. That wasn't designed to punish credit card companies. They provide a valuable service; they deserve to turn a profit. A recent study by independent economists show that these new protections are saving consumers more than $20 billion a year.

Now, the men and women who work for agencies like the CFTC, charged with financial reform in consumer protection, this is the work that they do: save consumers money and prevent systemic risk from happening again. They've exposed deceptive mortgage schemes, abusive debt collection practices that prey on Americans who were hit hard by the recession. They've partnered with States to secure a $50 billion settlement for 600,000 homeowners who were targeted by some of these mortgage schemes. The new consumer watchdog agency we set up is working to empower students and veterans and families with the straightforward information they need to make sound financial choices like buying a home or paying for college. And so far, it has secured more than $700 million in refunds to more than nearly 8 million hard-working American consumers who were abused by unfair or abusive practices.

So that's what financial reform is all about. That's what a well-functioning CFTC is all about: protecting hard-working Americans by making sure everyone plays by the same set of rules, preserving trust in the integrity of our markets and our financial system, preventing a crisis like the one we endured from ever happening again. And we've come too far and the American people have sacrificed too much to go back to the old days. Our economy is growing, our businesses are creating jobs, and those of us who have been sent here to serve should be doing everything we can to strengthen the middle class, strengthen the financial markets, and rebuild an economy where everybody who works hard has a chance to get ahead.

That has been what Gary has been up to the entire time that he's served at the CFTC. We couldn't be prouder of the work that he has done. I'm confident that as soon as Congress confirms Tim and allows him to carry on that important work, he is going to be carrying those same values with him, with the outstanding team that we have at this agency.

So to both of you, thanks for being great public servants.

Chairman Gensler. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Gary, good luck to you. And Tim, congratulations.

Chairman-designate Massad. Thank you.

The President. Let's get you confirmed. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:28 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; former President George W. Bush; and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell.

Statement on the Passage of Marriage Equality Legislation in Hawaii
November 12, 2013

I want to congratulate the Hawaii State Legislature on passing legislation in support of marriage equality. With today's vote, Hawaii joins a growing number of States that recognize that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters should be treated fairly and equally under the law. Whenever freedom and equality are affirmed, our country becomes stronger. By giving loving gay and lesbian couples the right to marry if they choose, Hawaii exemplifies the values we hold dear as a nation. I've always been proud to have been born in Hawaii, and

today's vote makes me even prouder. And Michelle and I extend our best wishes to all those in Hawaii whose families will now be now given the security and respect they deserve.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran
November 12, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within the 90-day period prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12170 of November 14, 1979, is to continue in effect beyond November 14, 2013.

Because our relations with Iran have not yet returned to normal, and the process of implementing the agreements with Iran, dated January 19, 1981, is still under way, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12170 with respect to Iran.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
November 12, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Tribal Nations Conference
November 13, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please, have a seat. Thank you, Karen, for the kind introduction.

A couple of people I want to introduce, or at least acknowledge. First of all, give it up for our outstanding new Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. We're joined by several other members of my Cabinet, which reflects how much my administration values your partnership, the partnership with your communities. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here.

I want to give, also, a special shout-out to one of my closest advisers, one of my oldest friends. But he's also a great friend to all of you, and he doesn't get a lot of credit, because he hates credit. He just likes to work behind the scenes. But he worked with many of you when he worked in the Senate. He has been a key adviser on Native American affairs for me throughout this process, and I could not be prouder of him: Mr. Pete Rouse. So give Mr. Pete Rouse a big round of applause.

Now, most of all, I want to thank all of you, especially the tribal leaders who are here today. And I understand, actually, we've got more tribal leaders here than we ever have at any of these conferences. So it just keeps on growing each year, which is wonderful news. You represent more than 300 tribal nations, each of you with your own extraordinary heritage, each a vital part of a shared American family. And as a proud adopted member of the Crow Nation, let me say *kaheé*—welcome—to all of you.

Now, after I became President, I said that, given the painful chapters and broken promises in our shared history, I'd make sure this country kept its promises to you. I promised that tribal nations would have a stronger voice in Washington, that as long as I was in the White House, it would be your house too. And

for the past 5 years, my administration has worked hard to keep that promise, to build a new relationship with you based on trust and respect.

And this new relationship wasn't just about learning from the past. It was also about the here and now, recognizing the contributions that your communities make to enrich the United States every single day. Native Americans are doctors and teachers and business men and women and veterans and servicemembers. And they get up every morning and help make America stronger and more prosperous and more just.

And I want to build on our true government-to-government relationship as well. So I'm proud to have Native Americans serving with dedication in my administration, including Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn of the Chickasaw Nation; my Senior Adviser for Native American Affairs, Jodi Gillette of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; our Governmental [Intergovernmental]* Affairs office, we've got Charlie Galbraith of the Navajo Nation. And I look forward to—so they worked so incredibly hard to make this conference possible, and I look forward to it every year.

I had the privilege of some of you coming to the White House yesterday. As we made clear in the Executive order earlier this year that established the White House Council on Native American Affairs, we have a unique legal and political relationship, one that's been affirmed many times in treaties, in statutes, and in the Constitution.

That's the unique relationship we honor today. That's the relationship we're called upon to sustain for the progress of all of our peoples. And while we should be proud of what we've achieved together in recent years, we also should be focused on all the work that we still have to do.

I know we've got members of the Iroquois Nations here today. And I think we could learn from the Iroquois Confederacy, just as our Founding Fathers did when they laid the groundwork for our democracy. The Iroquois called their network of alliances with other tribes and European nations a "covenant chain." Each link represented a bond of peace and friendship. But that covenant chain didn't sustain itself. It needed constant care so that it would stay strong. And that's what we're called to do, to keep the covenant between us for this generation and for future generations. And there are four areas in particular where I think we need to focus.

First, let's keep our covenant strong by strengthening justice and tribal sovereignty. We've worked with you in good faith to resolve longstanding disputes like establishing the Land Buy-Back Program to consolidate Indian lands and restore them to tribal trust lands. We've reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act so tribes can prosecute those who commit domestic violence in Indian Country, whether they're Native American or not. I signed changes to the Stafford Act, to let tribes directly request disaster assistance, because when disasters like floods or fires strike, you shouldn't have to wait for a middleman to get the help you need.

But there's more we can do to return more control to your communities. And that's why I'm urging Congress to reauthorize the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act, because your communities know your affordable housing needs better than Washington does. It's why we'll keep pushing Congress to pass the Carcieri fix, so that more tribal nations can put their land into Federal trust. And we've heard loud and clear your frustrations when it comes to the problem of being fully reimbursed by the Federal Government for the contracted services you provide, so we're going to keep working with you and Congress to find a solution. That's all going to be part of making sure that we're respecting the nation-to-nation relationship.

Now, second, we've got to keep our covenant strong by expanding opportunity for Native Americans. We've created jobs building new roads and high-speed Internet to connect

* White House correction.

more of your communities to the broader economy. We've made major investments in job training and tribal colleges and universities. But the fact remains, Native Americans face poverty rates that are higher by far than the national average. And that's more than a statistic, that's a moral call to action. We've got to do better.

So I said to some of you that I met with yesterday, growing our economy, creating new jobs is my top priority. We've got to stop the self-inflicted wounds in Washington. Because for many tribal nations, this year's harmful sequester cuts and last month's Government shutdown made a tough situation worse. Your schools, your police departments, child welfare offices are all feeling the squeeze. That's why I'm fighting for a responsible budget that invests in the things that we need in order to grow, things like education, and job training, and affordable housing and transportation, including for Native American communities. And we're going to work to make sure Native American–owned businesses have greater access to capital and to selling their goods overseas. So we've got to build the economy, create more opportunity.

Number three, we've got to keep our covenant strong by making sure Native Americans have access to quality, affordable health care just like everybody else. That's one of the reasons we fought hard to pass the Affordable Care Act, and we're working overtime to make sure the law works the way it's supposed to. For Native Americans, this means more access to comprehensive, affordable coverage. It permanently reauthorizes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which provides care to so many in your communities.

And let me just give you one example of how this law is already working for tribal nations. Thanks to the ACA, the Puyallup Tribal Health Authority in Washington State created the country's first tribal family medicine residency program. Patients are cared for in a culturally sensitive way, often by Native American staff. And we're seeing results: a young physician caring for a revered tribal elder; a doctor who has delivered babies in the community for years, and now his son is also doing the same. And that's creating more quality health care, but also sustaining bonds between generations. That's progress that we need to build on.

And then, the fourth area that we've got to work on is, let's keep our covenant strong by being good stewards of native homelands, which are sacred to you and your families. I saw the beauty of Crow Agency, Montana, when I was a candidate for this office. Next year, I'll make my first trip to Indian Country as President.

The health of tribal nations depends on the health of tribal lands. So it falls on all of us to protect the extraordinary beauty of those lands for future generations. And already, many of your lands have felt the impacts of a changing climate, including more extreme flooding and droughts. That's why, as part of the climate action plan I announced this year, my administration is partnering with you to identify where your lands are vulnerable to climate change, how we can make them more resilient.

And working together, we want to develop the energy potential of tribal lands in a responsible way and in accordance with tribal wishes. Over the last 4 years, we've more than doubled oil and gas revenues on tribal lands, a big reason why the United States is now more energy independent. So we're working with tribes to get more renewable energy projects, like solar and wind, up and running. Because your lands and your economies can be a source of renewable energy and the good local jobs that come with it.

So standing up for justice and tribal sovereignty, increasing economic opportunity, expanding quality health care, protecting native homelands—this is the foundation we can build on. This is the progress that we can make together.

And we don't have to look far for inspiration. Some of you know, Monday obviously was Veterans Day, a time to honor all who have worn America's uniform. I know everyone here is proud that Native Americans have such a high enlistment rate in our military. And we've seen generations of patriotic Native Americans who have served with honor and courage.

We draw strength from the Navajo Code Talkers whose skill helped win the Second World War. We draw strength from Woodrow Wilson Keeble, who many years after his death was finally awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism in the Korean War. We draw strength from—and I want to make sure I get this right—Lori Piestewa, who during the Iraq war was the first known Native American woman to give her life in combat for the United States. And we draw strength from all our men and women in uniform today, including two pilots I rely on when I step onto Marine One—Major Paul Bisulca, from the Penobscot Nation, and Major Eli Jones, of the Shoshone Bannock. And those guys are carrying me around, keeping me safe.

So, on this Veterans Day week, even though it's technically not Veterans Day, I want to ask all the veterans in the audience—including several legendary Navajo Code Talkers who are here— if you can, please stand, accept our gratitude.

For generations, these men and women have helped keep our covenant strong. So now we've got to keep strong what they've built, for this and generations to come. It falls to us to keep America the place where no matter where you come from, what you look like, you can always make it as long as you try, as long as you work hard. And I know that that's what—all of you are working hard. That's what you represent as leaders of the communities that are represented here from coast to coast. I want you to know, that's what I'm working for. That's the partnership that I cherish, and I will cherish as long as I have the honor of serving as your President.

So thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:57 p.m. at the Department of the Interior. In his remarks, he referred to Karen R. Diver, chairwoman of the business committee, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; Jodi Archambault Gillette, Senior Policy Adviser for Native American Affairs, Domestic Policy Council; Charles Galbraith, Associate Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement; Alan Shelton, clinical director, Puyallup Tribal Health Authority, and his son, clinic resident Austin Shelton; and Maj. Paul B. Biscula, USMC, and Maj. Eli Jones, USMC, Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX–1). He also referred to Executive Order 13647.

Statement on Typhoon Haiyan Recovery Efforts in the Philippines
November 13, 2013

Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the people of the Philippines as they mourn so many loved ones and neighbors lost in the awful destruction of Typhoon Haiyan. Here in the United States, we're offering our support to our fellow Filipino Americans who are worried for family and friends back home. The friendship between our two countries runs deep, and when our friends are in trouble, America helps. That's why, as I pledged to President Aquino yesterday, the United States will continue to offer whatever assistance we can.

Our support is rooted in the compassion and generosity of the American people who, time and again, have stepped up and helped those in need around the world. Today I encourage Americans who want to help our Filipino friends to visit whitehouse.gov/typhoon, which offers links to organizations working in the Philippines and ways to support their efforts. With so many families and communities in the Philippines in urgent need of food, water, shelter, and medicine, even small contributions can make a big difference and help save lives.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Government continues to do our part. Our USAID and military personnel are on the ground and working around the clock. The first American planes carrying emergency supplies and food for 10,000 families have arrived. U.S. ships, including the aircraft carrier USS *George Washington*, are on their way to the scene to help expand search and rescue operations, provide logistical sup-

port and medical care, and provide a platform for helicopters to move supplies to remote areas.

Recovering from one of the strongest storms ever recorded will take years. But the strength, resilience, and faith of the Filipino people are legendary and the areas affected by this storm are some of the same places where Americans and Filipinos sacrificed together to liberate the Philippines during World War II. Today our message to our Filipino allies is that we stand with you once more. In the difficult days ahead, we'll do our part to help you recover. And as you rebuild from this terrible storm, you will continue to have a friend and partner in the United States of America.

Statement on Signing the School Access to Emergency Epinephrine Act
November 13, 2013

I just want to thank all of the outstanding legislators who are here and advocates. This is something that will save children's lives. Some people may know that Malia actually has a peanut allergy. She doesn't have asthma, but obviously, making sure that EpiPens are available in case of emergency in schools is something that every parent can understand. And thanks to the bipartisan work of the folks behind us and the advocacy communities that have been pushing this so hard, we're going to be giving States a lot more incentives to make sure that that happens. So I want to congratulate all of you.

NOTE: H.R. 2094, approved November 13, was assigned Public Law No. 113–48.

The President's News Conference
November 14, 2013

The President. Good morning, everybody. Good afternoon. Today I want to update the American people on our efforts to implement and improve the Affordable Care Act, and I'll take a couple of your questions. But before I do, I just want to say a few words about the tragedy that's unfolded in the Philippines.

Over the past few days, I think all of us have been shaken by the images of the devastation wrought by Typhoon Haiyan. It's a heartbreaking reminder of how fragile life is, and among the dead are several Americans. So our prayers are with the Filipino people and with Filipino Americans across our country who are anxious about their family and friends back home.

One of our core principles is, when friends are in trouble, America helps. As I told President Aquino earlier this week, the United States will continue to offer whatever assistance we can. Our military personnel and USAID team do this better than anybody in the world, and they've been already on the ground working tirelessly to deliver food, water, medicine, shelter, and to help with airlift. Today the aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* and other ships arrived to help with search and rescue, as well as supplies, medical care, and logistical support. And more help is on the way.

America's strength, of course, has always been more than just about what our Government can do, it's also about what our citizens can do. It's about the big-heartedness of the American people when they see other folks in trouble. So today I would encourage everybody who wants to help, to visit whitehouse.gov/typhoon—that's whitehouse.gov/typhoon—and that will offer you links to organizations that are working on the ground and ways that you can support their efforts. Our friends in the Philippines will face a long, hard road ahead, but they'll continue to have a friend and partner in the United States of America.

Now, switching gears, it has now been 6 weeks since the Affordable Care Act's new marketplaces opened for business. I think it's fair to say that the rollout has been rough so far. And I think everybody understands that

I'm not happy about the fact that the rollout has been wrought with a whole range of problems that I've been deeply concerned about. But today I want to talk about what we know after these first few weeks and what we're doing to implement and improve the law.

Yesterday I—the White House announced that in the first month, more than 100,000 Americans successfully enrolled in new insurance plans. Is that as high a number as we'd like? Absolutely not. But it does mean that people want affordable health care. The problems of the website have prevented too many Americans from completing the enrollment process. And that's on us, not on them. But there is no question that there's real demand for quality, affordable health insurance.

In the first month, nearly a million people successfully completed an application for themselves or their families. Those applications represent more than 1.5 million people. Of those 1.5 million people, 106,000 of them have successfully signed up to get covered.

Another 396,000 have the ability to gain access to Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. That's been less reported on, but it shouldn't be. Americans who are having a difficult time, who are poor, many of them working, may have a disability—they're Americans like everybody else, and the fact that they are now able to get insurance is going to be critically important.

Later today I'll be in Ohio, where Governor Kasich, a Republican, has expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. And as many as 275,000 Ohioans will ultimately be better off because of it. And if every Governor followed suit, another 5.4 million Americans could gain access to health care next year.

So bottom line is, in just 1 month, despite all the problems that we've seen with the website, more than 500,000 Americans could know the security of health care by January 1, many of them for the first time in their lives. And that's life changing, and it's significant.

That still leaves about 1 million Americans who successfully made it through the website, and now qualify to buy insurance, but haven't picked a plan yet. And there's no question that if the website were working as it's supposed to, that number would be much higher of people who have actually enrolled. So that's problem number one: making sure that the website works the way it's supposed to. It's gotten a lot better over the last few weeks than it was on the first day, but we're working 24/7 to get it working for the vast majority of Americans in a smooth, consistent way.

The other problem that has received a lot of attention concerns Americans who have received letters from their insurers that they may be losing the plans they bought in the old individual market, often because they no longer meet the law's requirements to cover basic benefits like prescription drugs or doctors' visits.

Now, as I indicated earlier, I completely get how upsetting this can be for a lot of Americans, particularly after assurances they heard from me that if they had a plan that they liked, they could keep it. And to those Americans, I hear you loud and clear. I said that I would do everything we can to fix this problem. And today I'm offering an idea that will help do it.

Already, people who have plans that predate the Affordable Care Act can keep those plans if they haven't changed. That was already in the law. That's what's called a grandfather clause. It was included in the law. Today we're going to extend that principle both to people whose plans have changed since the law took effect and to people who bought plans since the law took effect.

So State insurance commissioners still have the power to decide what plans can and can't be sold in their States. But the bottom line is, insurers can extend current plans that would otherwise be canceled into 2014, and Americans whose plans have been canceled can choose to reenroll in the same kind of plan.

We're also requiring insurers to extend current plans to inform their customers about two things: one, that protections—what protections these renewed plans don't include; and number two, that the marketplace offers new options with better coverage and tax credits that might help you bring down the costs.

So if you've received one of these letters, I'd encourage you to take a look at the marketplace. Even if the website isn't working as smoothly as it should be for everybody yet, the plan comparison tool that lets you browse costs for new plans near you is working just fine.

Now, this fix won't solve every problem for every person. But it's going to help a lot of people. Doing more will require work with Congress. And I've said from the beginning, I'm willing to work with Democrats and Republicans to fix problems as they arise. This is an example of what I was talking about. We can always make this law work better.

It is important to understand, though, that the old individual market was not working well. And it's important that we don't pretend that somehow that's a place worth going back to. Too often, it works fine as long as you stay healthy; it doesn't work well when you're sick. So year after year, Americans were routinely exposed to financial ruin or denied coverage due to minor preexisting conditions or dropped from coverage altogether even if they paid their premiums on time.

That's one of the reasons we pursued this reform in the first place. And that's why I will not accept proposals that are just another brazen attempt to undermine or repeal the overall law and drag us back into a broken system. We will continue to make the case, even to folks who choose to keep their own plans, that they should shop around in the new marketplace because there's a good chance that they'll be able to buy better insurance at lower cost.

So we're going to do everything we can to help the Americans who have received these cancellation notices. But I also want everybody to remember there are still 40 million Americans who don't have health insurance at all. I'm not going to walk away from 40 million people who have the chance to get health insurance for the first time. And I'm not going to walk away from something that has helped the cost of health care grow at its slowest rate in 50 years.

So we're at the opening weeks of the project to build a better health care system for everybody, a system that will offer real financial security and peace of mind to millions of Americans. It is a complex process. There are all kinds of challenges. I'm sure there will be additional challenges that come up. And it's important that we're honest and straightforward in terms of when we come up with a problem with these reforms and these laws, that we address them. But we've got to move forward on this.

It took a hundred years for us to even get to the point where we could start talking about and implementing a law to make sure everybody has got health insurance. And my pledge to the American people is, is that we're going to solve the problems that are there, we're going to get it right, and the Affordable Care Act is going to work for the American people.

So with that, I'm going to take your questions, and I'm going to start with Julie Pace of AP.

Public Opinion Toward the Federal Government/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The combination of the website problems and the concerns over the policy cancellations has sparked a lot of worry within your own party.

The President. Right.

Q. And polls also show that you're taking some hits with the public on both your overall job approval rating and also on factors like trust and honesty. Do you feel as though the flawed health care rollout has led to a breach in the public trust and confidence in Government? And if so, how do you plan to resolve that?

The President. There is no doubt that people are frustrated. We just came out of a shutdown and the possibility that for the first time in over 200 years, we wouldn't pay our bills. And people breathed a sigh of relief when that finally got done, and the next thing they know is, is that the President's health care reform can't get the website to work and that there are these other problems with respect to cancellation notices.

And I understand why folks are frustrated. I would be too. Because sometimes, people look at what's taking place in Washington, and they say, not enough is getting done that helps me

with my life. And regardless of what Congress does, ultimately, I'm the President of the United States, and they expect me to do something about it.

So, in terms of how I intend to approach it, I'm just going to keep on working as hard as I can around the priorities that the American people care about. And I think it's legitimate for them to expect me to have to win back some credibility on this health care law in particular, and on a whole range of these issues in general.

And that's on me. I mean, we fumbled the rollout on this health care law. There are a whole bunch of things about it that are working really well, which people didn't notice, right, because they weren't controversial: so making sure kids could stay on their parents' plans until they were—through the age of 25, and making sure that seniors got more discounts on their prescription drugs. There were a whole bunch of stuff that we did well over the first 3 years.

But we always knew that these marketplaces—creating a place where people can shop and through competition get a better deal for the health insurance that their families need—we always knew that that was going to be complicated and everybody was going to be paying a lot of attention to it. And we should have done a better job getting that right on day 1, not on day 28 or on day 40.

I am confident that by the time we look back on this next year, that people are going to say this is working well, and it's helping a lot of people. But my intention in terms of winning back the confidence of the American people is just to work as hard as I can, identify the problems that we've got, make sure that we're fixing them. Whether it's a website, whether it is making sure that folks who got these cancellation notices get help, we're just going to keep on chipping away at this until the job is done.

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Healthcare.gov Website/Cancellation of Health Insurance Plans

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said while the law was being debated, "If you like your plan, you can keep it." You said after the law was implemented or signed, "If you like your plan, you can keep it." Americans believed you, sir, when you said that to them over and over.

The President. Right.

Q. Do you not believe, sir, the American people deserve a deeper, more transparent accountability from you as to why you said that over and over when your own statistic published in the *Federal Register* alerted your policy staff—and I presume you—to the fact that millions of Americans would, in fact, probably fall into the very gap you're trying to administratively fix now?

That's one question. Second question. [*Laughter*] You were informed, or several people in this building were informed, 2 weeks before the launch of the website that it was failing the most basic tests internally, and yet a decision was made to launch the website on October 1. Did you, sir, make that test? And if so, did you regret that?

The President. Okay, on the website, I was not informed directly that the website would not be working the way it was supposed to. Had I been informed, I wouldn't be going out saying, boy, this is going to be great.

I'm accused of a lot of things, but I don't think I'm stupid enough to go around saying, this is going to be like shopping on Amazon or Travelocity a week before the website opens if I thought that it wasn't going to work. So clearly, we and I did not have enough awareness about the problems in the website. Even a week into it, the thinking was that these were some glitches that would be fixed with patches, as opposed to some broader systemic problems that took much longer to fix and we're still working on them.

So that doesn't excuse the fact that they just don't work. But I think it's fair to say that, no, Garrett—Major, we would not have rolled out something knowing very well that it wasn't going to work the way it was supposed, given all the scrutiny that we knew was going to be on the website.

With respect to the pledge I made that if you like your plan, you can keep it, I think—and I've said in interviews—that there is no

doubt that the way I put that forward unequivocally ended up not being accurate. It was not because of my intention not to deliver on that commitment and that promise. We put a grandfather clause into the law, but it was insufficient.

Keep in mind that the individual market accounts for 5 percent of the population. So when I said you can keep your health care, I'm looking at folks who've got employer-based health care; I'm looking at folks who've got Medicare and Medicaid, and that accounts for the vast majority of Americans. And then for people who don't have any health insurance at all, obviously that didn't apply. My commitment to them was, you're going to be able to get affordable health care for the first time.

You have an individual market that accounts for about 5 percent of the population. And our working assumption was—my working assumption was—that the majority of those folks would find better policies at lower costs or the same costs in the marketplaces and that the universe of folks who potentially would not find a better deal in the marketplaces, the grandfather clause would work sufficiently for them. And it didn't. And again, that's on us. Which is why we're—that's on me. And that's why I'm trying to fix it. And as I said earlier, I guess last week, and I will repeat, that's something I deeply regret, because it's scary getting a cancellation notice.

Now, it is important to understand that out of that population, typically, there is constant churn in that market. This market is not very stable and reliable for people. So people have a lot of complaints when they're in that marketplace. As long as you're healthy, things seem to be going pretty good. And so a lot of people think, I've got pretty good insurance, until they get sick, and then suddenly, they look at the fine print, and they've got a $50,000 out-of-pocket expense that they can't pay.

We know that on average, over the last decade, each year, premiums in that individual market would go up an average of 15 percent a year. I know that because when we were talking about health care reform, one of the complaints was: I bought health care in the individual market, and I just got a notice from the insurer, they dropped me after I had an illness; or my premium skyrocketed by 20 or 30 percent, why aren't we doing something about this?

So part of what our goal has been is to make sure that that individual market is stable and fair and has the kind of consumer protections that make sure that people don't get a rude surprise when they really need health insurance. But if you just got a cancellation notice, and so far you're thinking, my prices are pretty good, you haven't been sick, and it fits your budget, and now you get this notice, you're going to be worried about it. And if the insurer is saying the reason you're getting this notice is because of the Affordable Care Act, then you're going to be understandably aggravated about it.

Now, for a big portion of those people, the truth is they might have gotten a notice saying, we're jacking up your rates by 30 percent. They might have said, from here on out, we're not going to cover X, Y, and Z illnesses, we're changing the—because these were all 12-month policies. The insurance companies were under no obligation to renew the exact same policies that you had before.

But look, one of the things I understood when we decided to reform the health insurance market, part of the reason why it hasn't been done before and it's very difficult to do, is that anything that's going on that's tough in the health care market, if you initiated a reform, can be attributed to your law. And so what we want to do is to be able to say to these folks, you know what, the Affordable Care Act is not going to be the reason why insurers have to cancel your plan.

Now, what folks may find is, the insurance companies may still come back and say, we want to charge you 20 percent more than we did last year or we're not going to cover prescription drugs now. But that will—that's in the nature of the market that existed earlier.

Q. Did you decide, sir, that the simple declaration was something the American people could handle, but this nuanced answer you just gave now was something that you couldn't

handle and you didn't trust the American people with a fuller truth?

The President. No. I think, as I said earlier, Major, my expectation was that for 98 percent of the American people, either it genuinely wouldn't change at all or they'd be pleasantly surprised with the options in the marketplace, and that the grandfather clause would cover the rest.

That proved not to be the case. And that's on me. And the American people—those who got cancellation notices do deserve and have received an apology from me. But they don't want just words, what they want is whether we can make sure that they are in a better place and that we meet that commitment.

And by the way, I think it's very important for me to note that there are a whole bunch of folks up in Congress and others who made this statement, and they were entirely sincere about it. And the fact that you've got this percentage of people who have had this impact, I want them to know that their Senator or Congressman, they were making representations based on what I told them and what this White House and our administrative staff told them. And so it's not on them, it's on us. But it is something that we intend to fix. Good.

Steve Collinson [Agence France-Presse].

Iran

Q. Do you have reason to believe that Iran would walk away from nuclear talks if Congress draws up new sanctions? And would that—would a diplomatic breakdown at this stage leave you no option but military action? And how do you respond to your critics on the Hill who say that it was only tough sanctions that got Iran to the table, but only tougher sanctions will make it capitulate?

The President. Well, let me make a couple of points. Number one, I've said before, and I will repeat: We do not want Iran having nuclear weapons. And it would be not only dangerous to us and our allies, but it would be destabilizing to the entire region and could trigger a nuclear arms race that would make life much more dangerous for all of us. So our policy is, Iran cannot have nuclear weapons. And I'm leaving all options on the table to make sure that we meet that goal.

Point number two: The reason we've got such vigorous sanctions is because I and my administration put in place, when I came into office, the international structure to have the most effective sanctions ever. And so I think it's fair to say that I know a little bit about sanctions, since we've set them up and made sure that we mobilize the entire international community so that there weren't a lot of loopholes and they really had bite.

And the intention in setting up those sanctions always was to bring the Iranians to the table so that we could resolve this issue peacefully, because that is my preference. That's my preference because any armed conflict has cost to it, but it's also my preference because the best way to assure that a country does not have nuclear weapons is that they are making a decision not to have nuclear weapons and we're in a position to verify that they don't have nuclear weapons.

So, as a consequence of the sanctions that we put in place—and I appreciate all the help, bipartisan help, that we received from Congress in making that happen—Iran's economy has been crippled. They had a negative 5-percent growth rate last year. Their currency plummeted. They're having significant problems in just the day-to-day economy on the ground in Iran. And President Rouhani made a decision that he was prepared to come and have a conversation with the international community about what they could do to solve this problem with us.

We've now had a series of conversations, and it has never been realistic that we would resolve the entire problem all at once. What we have done is seen the possibility of an agreement in which Iran would halt advances on its program; that it would dilute some of the highly enriched uranium that makes it easier for them to potentially produce a weapon; that they are subjecting themselves to much more vigorous inspections so that we know exactly what they're doing at all their various facilities; and that that would then provide time and space for us to test, over a certain period of

months, whether or not they are prepared to actually resolve this issue to the satisfaction of the international community, making us confident that, in fact, they're not pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

In return, the basic structure of what's been talked about, although not completed, is that we would provide very modest relief at the margins of the sanctions that we've set up. But importantly, we would leave in place the core sanctions that are most effective and have most impact on the Iranian economy, specifically, oil sanctions and sanctions with respect to banks and financing. And what that gives us is the opportunity to test how serious are they, but it also gives us an assurance that if it turns out 6 months from now that they're not serious, we can crank—we can dial those sanctions right back up.

So my message to Congress has been that, let's see if this short-term, phase one deal can be completed to our satisfaction where we're absolutely certain that while we're talking with the Iranians, they're not busy advancing their program. We can buy some additional months in terms of their breakout capacity. Let's test how willing they are to actually resolve this diplomatically and peacefully.

We will have lost nothing if, at the end of the day, it turns out that they are not prepared to provide the international community the hard proof and assurances necessary for us to know that they're not pursuing a nuclear weapon. And if that's—turns out to be the case, then not only is our entire sanctions infrastructure still in place, not only are they still losing money from the fact that they can't sell their oil and get revenue from their oil as easily, even throughout these talks, but other options remain.

But what I've said to Members of Congress is that if, in fact, we're serious about trying to resolve this diplomatically—because no matter how good our military is, military options are always messy, they're always difficult, always have unintended consequences and in this situation are never complete in terms of making us certain that they don't then go out and pursue, even more vigorously, nuclear weapons in the future—if we're serious about pursuing diplomacy, then there's no need for us to add new sanctions on top of the sanctions that are already very effective and that brought them to the table in the first place.

Now, if it turns out they can't deliver, they can't come to the table in a serious way and get this issue resolved, the sanctions can be ramped back up. And we've got that option. All right?

Roger Runningen [Bloomberg News]. Roger, it's his birthday, by the way. So that's not the reason you got a question, but I thought it was important to note that.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Happy birthday.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Healthcare.gov Website/Information Technology

Q. Back to health care. Can you guarantee for the American people that the health care website is going to be fully operational for all people, not just the vast majority, by November 30? And second, more broadly, this is your signature domestic piece of legislation.

The President. Right.

Q. You hear criticism on the Hill that you and your White House team are too insular. Is that how this mess came to be?

The President. Well, I think there is going to be a lot of evaluation of how we got to this point. And I'm sure—I assure you that I've been asking a lot of questions about that. The truth is that this is, number one, very complicated. The website itself is doing a lot of stuff. There aren't a lot of websites out there that have to help people compare their possible insurance options, verify income to find out what kind of tax credits they might get, communicate with those insurance companies so that they can purchase, make sure that all of it's verified. Right? So there's just a bunch of pieces to it that made it challenging.

And you combine that with the fact that the Federal Government does a lot of things really well. One of the things it does not do well is information technology procurement. This is kind of a systematic problem that we have

across the board. And it is not surprising then that there were going to be some problems.

Now, I think we have to ask ourselves some hard questions inside the White House as opposed to why we didn't see more of these problems coming earlier on: A, so we could set expectations; B, so that we could look for different ways for people to end up applying.

So, ultimately, you're right. This is something that's really important to me, and it's really important to millions of Americans who have been waiting for a really long time to try to get health care, because they don't have it. And I am very frustrated, but I'm also somebody who, if I fumbled the ball, I'm going to wait until I get the next play, and then I'm going to try to run as hard as I can and do right by the team. So ultimately, I'm the head of this team. We did fumble the ball on it, and what I'm going to do is make sure that we get it fixed.

In terms of what happens on November 30 or December 1, I think it's fair to say that the improvement will be marked and noticeable. The website will work much better on November 30, December 1 than it worked certainly on October 1, but that's a pretty low bar. It will be working a lot better than it is—it was last week, and it will be working better than it was this week, which means that the majority of people who go to the website will see a website that is working the way it's supposed to.

I think it is not possible for me to guarantee that a hundred percent of the people a hundred percent of the time going on this website will have a perfectly seamless, smooth experience. We're going to have to continue to improve it even after November 30, December 1. But the majority of people who use it will be able to see it operate the way it was supposed to.

One thing that we've discovered, though, that I think is worth noting: A lot of focus has been on the website and the technology, and that's partly because that's how we initially identified it; these are glitches. What we're discovering is that part of the problem has been technology—hardware and software—and that's being upgraded. But even if we get the hardware and software working exactly the way it's supposed to, with relatively minor glitches, what we're also discovering is that insurance is complicated to buy.

And another mistake that we made, I think, was underestimating the difficulties of people purchasing insurance online and shopping for a lot of options with a lot of costs and a lot of different benefits and plans and somehow expecting that that would be very smooth. And then they've also got to try to apply for tax credits on the website.

So what we're doing even as we're trying to solve the technical problems is also, what can we do to make the application a little bit simpler? What can we do to make it in English as opposed to bureaucratese? Are there steps that we can skip while still getting the core information that people need?

And part of what we're realizing is that they are going to be a certain portion of people who are just going to need more help and more handholding in the application process. And so I guess part of the continuous improvement that I'm looking at is not just a technical issue. It's also, can we streamline the application process? What are we doing to give people more assistance in the application process? How do the call centers and the people who are helping folks in person? How are they trained so that things can go more smoothly?

Because the bottom line ultimately is, I just want people to know what their options are in a clear way. And buying health insurance is never going to be like buying a song on iTunes. It's just a much more complicated transaction. But I think we can continue to make it better. All of which is to say that on December 1, November 30, it will be a lot better, but there will still be some problems. Some of those will not be because of technological problems, although I'm sure that there will still be some glitches that have to be smoothed out. Some of it's going to be, how are we making this application process more user friendly for folks?

And one good example of this, by the way, just to use an analogy: When we came into office, we heard a lot of complaints about the financial aid forms that families have to fill out to get Federal financial aid. And I actually re-

member applying for some of that stuff and remember how difficult and confusing it was. And Arne Duncan over at Education worked with a team to see what we could do to simplify it, and it made a big difference.

And that's part of the process that we've got to go through. And in fact, if we can get some focus groups and we sit down with actual users and see how well is this working, what would improve it, what part of it didn't you understand, that all I think is part of what we're going to be working on in the weeks ahead.

Q. What about the insularity criticism that you hear on the Hill?

The President. I've got to say I meet with an awful lot of folks, and I talk to an awful lot of folks every day. And I have lunches with CEOs and IT venture capitalists and labor leaders and pretty much folks from all walks of life on a whole bunch of topics. And if you looked at my schedule on any given day, we're interacting with a whole lot of people.

And I think it's fair to say that we have a pretty good track record of working with folks on technology and IT from our campaign where, both in 2008 and 2012, we did a pretty darn good job on that. So it's not—the idea that somehow we didn't have access or were interested in people's ideas, I think isn't accurate. What is true is that, as I said before, our IT systems, how we purchase technology in the Federal Government is cumbersome, complicated, and outdated.

And so this isn't a situation where—on my campaign, I could simply say, who are the best folks out there? Let's get them around a table. Let's figure out what we're doing, and we're just going to continue to improve it and refine it and work on our goals. If you're doing it at the Federal Government level, you're going through 40 pages of specs and this and that and the other, and there are all kinds of laws involved, and it makes it more difficult. It's part of the reason why, chronically, Federal IT programs are over budget, behind schedule.

And one of the—when I do some Monday morning quarterbacking on myself, one of the things that I do recognize is—since I know that the Federal Government has not been good at this stuff in the past—2 years ago, as we were thinking about this, we might have done more to make sure that we were breaking the mold on how we were going to be setting this up. But that doesn't help us now. We've got to move forward.

Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Cancellation of Health Insurance Plans/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Today's fix that you just announced leaves it up to State insurance commissioners and insurance companies to ultimately decide whether to allow old policies to be renewed for a year. How confident are you that they will do that? And secondly, how concerned are you that this flawed rollout may hurt Democrats' chances in next year's midterm elections and your ability to advance other priorities such as immigration reform?

The President. All right. On the first question, traditionally, State insurance commissioners make decisions about what plans can be or cannot be sold, how they interact with insurers. What we're essentially saying is, the Affordable Care Act is not going to be the factor in what happens with folks in the individual market. And my guess is, right away you're going to see a number of State insurance commissioners exercise it.

Part of the challenge is, the individual markets are different in different States. There are some States that have individual insurance markets that already have almost all the consumer protections that the Affordable Care Act does. They match up pretty good. It's not some big jump for folks to move into the marketplace. In others, they're pretty low standards, so you can sell pretty substandard plans in those markets. And that's where people might see a bigger jump in their premiums.

So I think there's going to be some State-by-State evaluation on how this is handled. But the key point is, is that it allows us to be able to say to the folks who received these notices: Look, I, the President of the United States, and the insurance—that the insurance model, the Affordable Care Act, is not going to be

getting in the way of you shopping in the individual market that you used to have. Now, as I said, there are still going to be some folks who over time, I think, are going to find that the marketplaces are better.

One way I described this to—I met with a group of Senators when this issue first came up, and it's not a perfect analogy, but we made a decision as a society that every car has to have a seatbelt or airbags. And so you pass a regulation. And there are some additional costs, particularly at the start of increasing the safety and protections, but we make a decision as a society that the costs are outweighed by the benefits of all the lives that are saved. So what we're saying now is, if you're buying a new car, you got to have a seatbelt.

Well, the problem with the grandfather clause that we put in place is it's almost like we said to folks, you got to buy a new car, even if you can't afford it right now. And sooner or later, folks are going to start trading in their old cars. But we don't need—if their life circumstance is such where, for now at least, they want to keep the old car, even if the new car is better, we should be able to give them that option. And that's what we want to do.

Q. And the politics——

The President. And by the way, that's what we should have been able to do in drafting the rules in the first place. So again, these are two fumbles on something that—on a big game, which—but the game is not over.

With respect to the politics of it, I'll let you guys do a lot of the work on projecting what this means for various political scenarios. There is no doubt that our failure to roll out the ACA smoothly has put a burden on Democrats, whether they're running or not, because they stood up and supported this effort through thick and thin. And I feel deeply responsible for making it harder for them rather than easier for them to continue to promote the core values that, I think, led them to support this thing in the first place, which is, in this country, as wealthy as we are, everybody should be able to have the security of affordable health care. And that's why I feel so strongly about fixing it.

My first and foremost obligation is the American people, to make sure that they can get what's there—if we can just get the darn website working and smooth this thing out—which is plans that are affordable and allow them to take advantage of tax credits and give them a better deal.

But I also do feel an obligation to everybody out there who supported this effort. When we don't do a good job on the rollout, we're letting them down. And I don't like doing that. So my commitment to them is, we're going to just keep on doing better every day until we get it done.

And in terms of the impact on me—I think to some extent I addressed it when I talked to Julie—there are going to be ups and downs during the course of my Presidency. And I think I said early on when I was running, I am not a perfect man and I will not be a perfect President, but I'll wake up every single day working as hard as I can on behalf of Americans out there from every walk of life who are working hard, meeting their responsibilities, but sometimes are struggling because the way the system works isn't giving them a fair shot.

And that pledge I haven't broken. That commitment, that promise, continues to be—continues to hold: the promise that I wouldn't be perfect, number one, but also the promise that as long as I've got the honor of having this office, I'm just going to work as hard as I can to make things better for folks. And what that means specifically in this health care arena is, we can't go back to the status quo.

I mean, right now everybody is properly focused on us not doing a good job on the rollout, and that's legitimate, and I get it. There have been times where I thought we were kind of slapped around a little bit unjustly. This one is deserved. Right? It's on us.

But we can't lose sight of the fact that the status quo before the Affordable Care Act was not working at all. If the health care system had been working fine and everybody had high-quality health insurance at affordable prices, I wouldn't have made it a priority; we wouldn't have been fighting this hard to get it done, which is why, when I see sometimes

folks up on Capitol Hill, and Republicans in particular, who have been suggesting repeal, repeal, let's get rid of this thing, I keep on asking what is it that you want to do? Are you suggesting that the status quo was working? Because it wasn't, and everybody knows it. It wasn't working in the individual market, and it certainly wasn't working for the 41 million people who didn't have health insurance.

And so what we did was we chose a path that was the least disruptive, to try to finally make sure that health care is treated in this country like it is in every other advanced country: that it's not some privilege that just a certain portion of people can have, but it's something that everybody has some confidence about. And we didn't go far left and choose an approach that would have been much more disruptive. We didn't adopt some more conservative proposals that would have been much more disruptive. We tried to choose a way that built off the existing system. But it is complicated, it is hard, but I make no apologies for us taking this on, because somebody sooner or later had to do it. I do make apologies for not having executed better over the last several months.

Immigration Reform

Q. And do you think that execution and the flaws in the rollout will affect your ability to do other things, like immigration reform and other policy priorities?

The President. Well, look, if it comes to immigration reform, there is no reason for us not to do immigration reform. And we've already got strong bipartisan support for immigration reform out of the Senate. You've got—I met with a number of traditionally very conservative clergy who are deeply committed to immigration reform. We've got the business community entirely behind immigration reform. So you've got a bunch of constituencies that are traditionally much more—have leaned much more heavily towards the Republicans who are behind this.

So if people are looking for an excuse not to do the right thing on immigration reform, they can always find an excuse: We've run out of time, or this is hard, or—the list goes on and on. But my working assumption is people should want to do the right thing. And when you've got an issue that would strengthen borders, make sure that the legal immigration system works the way it's supposed to, that would go after employers who have been doing the wrong thing when it comes to hiring undocumented workers and would allow folks who are here illegally to get right with the law and pay a fine and learn English and get to the back of the line, but ultimately join fully our American community—when you've got a law that makes sense, you shouldn't be looking for an excuse not to do it. And I'm going to keep on pushing to make sure it gets done.

Am I going to have to do some work to rebuild confidence around some of our initiatives? Yes. But part of this job is the things that go right, you guys aren't going to write about; the things that go wrong get prominent attention. That's how it has always been. That's not unique to me as President. And I'm up to the challenge. We're going to get this done.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:02 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks at ArcelorMittal Cleveland in Cleveland, Ohio
November 14, 2013

The President. Hey! Hello, Ohio! Well, it is good to be back in Cleveland. The last time I was here was about a year ago, in the final days of the campaign. I know how much you miss hearing how I approve this message every night on TV. [*Laughter*] I will say it is nice to be here when the only real battle for Ohio is the Browns-Bengals game this Sunday. He's got the Browns shirt right here, Browns cap. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Yes, sir!

The President. The—I want to thank Scotty for that terrific introduction. Give him a big

round of applause. He was a natural. I want to thank your CEO, Lakshmi Mittal, for investing in America and the Cleveland area. We appreciate him. And I want to thank all of you for having me here today.

Along with me, there are a couple of people I just want to acknowledge. First of all, America's Secretary of Energy, Ernie Moniz, is here. Right there. And Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur is here. Give Marcy a big round of applause. Fighting for working people every day.

And earlier this afternoon I had a chance to see your mayor, Frank Jackson; your county executive, Ed FitzGerald. And I want—even though they're not here, I want to thank them for the great work they're doing on behalf of working people throughout the region.

And then finally, I want to thank Mark and Gary for showing me one of the biggest steel plants in America. They told me that folks are proud to have been making steel right here for a century—a hundred years—right here. And they explained that, today, you—the steel you make is some of the strongest you'll find anywhere in the world. This is one of the most productive plants in the world. Best workers in the world.

And what's remarkable is, when you think about it, go back to where this plant was just a few years ago: Economy was in a free fall, auto industry on the brink of collapse. And that meant demand for steel had dried up. The blast furnaces went quiet. About 1,200 steelworkers punched out for what might have been the last time. And that all came at the end of a decade when the middle class was already working harder and harder just to get by and nearly one in three American manufacturing jobs had vanished, a lot of them going overseas. And that could have devastated this community for good.

But we rolled up our sleeves, we made some tough choices. We rescued and retooled the American auto industry; it saved more than a million jobs. We bet on American ingenuity and American workers. And assembly lines started humming again, and automakers started to make cars again. And just a few months after this plant shut down, your plant manager got the call: Fire those furnaces back up, get those workers back on the job. And over the last 4 years, you've made yourselves one of the most productive steel mills not just in America, but in the world. [*Applause*] In the world.

So you retooled to make the stronger steel that goes into newer, better American cars and trucks. You created new partnerships with schools and community colleges to make sure that folks who work here have the high skill—high-tech skills they need for the high-tech jobs, because I was looking around this factory, and there's a whole bunch of computer stuff going on and—[*laughter*].

One of your engineers—and I want to make sure I get Margaret's name right here—Margaret Krolikowski. Did I get that right, Margaret? Where's Margaret? Where is she? There she is back there. So I'm going to quote you, I'm going to quote you. Here's what Margaret said: "When we came back, we wanted to make sure we were in a position where we never shut down again." Never shut down again. And that means making sure that workers here are constantly upgrading their skills and investments being made in the state-of-the-art technology.

And it was interesting, when I was meeting a number of the folks who were giving me the tour—folks who have been here 30 years, 40 years—but obviously, the plant's changed, and so during that period, they've had to upgrade their skills. That's what's happened. And that—and the story of this plant is the story of America over the last 5 years. We haven't just been recovering from a crisis, what we've been trying to do is rebuild a new foundation for growth and prosperity to protect ourselves from future crises. And because of the grit and resilience and optimism of the American people, we're seeing comeback stories like yours all across America.

Over the last 44 months, our businesses have created 7.8 million new jobs. Last month, another 200,000 Americans went back to work. And a lot of those jobs are in manufacturing. So now we've got to do more to get those engines of the economy churning even faster. But because we've been willing to do some hard things—not just kick the can down the road—factories are

reopening their doors, businesses are hiring new workers, companies that were shipping jobs overseas, they're starting to talk about bringing those jobs back to America. We're starting to see that.

And let me give you an example, because we were talking about this; Mr. Mittal and others were talking about what's different now. Take a look at what we've done with American energy. For years, folks have talked about reducing our dependence on foreign oil, but we didn't really do it. And we were just importing more and more oil, sending more and more money overseas. Gas prices keep on going up and up and up. We finally decided we were going to do something about it.

So we invested in new American technologies to reverse our addiction to foreign oil, double wind power, double solar power, produce more oil, produce more natural gas, and do it all in a way that is actually bringing down some of our pollution, making our entire economy more energy efficient. Today, we generate more renewable energy than ever. We produce more natural gas than anybody in the world. Just yesterday we learned that for the first time since 1995, the United States of America produces more of our own oil here at home than we buy from other countries. [*Applause*] First time since 1995. And that's a big deal. That's what America has done these past 5 years.

And that is a huge competitive advantage for us. Part of the reason companies now want to move—we were just talking about it—this plant, if it's located in Germany, energy costs are double, maybe triple; same in Japan. So this gives us a big edge. But this is also important: We reached the milestone not just because we're producing more energy, but also, we're wasting less energy. And this plant's a good example of it. We set new fuel standards that double the distance our cars and trucks go on a gallon of gas by the middle of the next decade. That saves the average driver—everybody here—more than $8,000 at the pump over the life of a new car. You like that? [*Applause*] We launched initiatives to put people to work upgrading our homes, and our businesses, and our factories so we're wasting less energy. All that saves businesses money on their energy bills. Your plant is one of the hundreds to answer that call. And if you're saving money on energy costs, that means you can invest in equipment, invest in workers, hire more people, produce more product.

And here's another thing: Between more clean energy, less wasted energy, the carbon pollution that's helping to warm the planet, that actually starts going down. And that's good news for anybody who cares about leaving a planet to our kids that is as beautiful as the one we got from our parents and our grandparents. So it's a win-win. Our economy keeps growing, creating new jobs, which means that strengthening our energy security and increasing energy efficiency doesn't have to be a choice between the environment and the economy. We can do both.

So we've tackled the way we use energy. That's making America more competitive in order to attract good jobs. We've also tackled our deficits. A lot of people have been concerned about deficits. Since I took office, we cut them in half. That makes America more attractive when it comes to business investment decisions.

And we've tackled a broken health care system. Obviously, we're not done yet. [*Applause*] Obviously, we're not done yet. But over the last 3 years, health care costs have grown at the slowest pace on record. And this is a great place to work thanks to a great steelworkers union and cooperation between management and labor. But just keep in mind that if businesses' health care costs are growing at about one-third the rate that they were a decade ago, that makes America a more affordable place to do business, and it also means that the investors here, if they're putting less money into health care costs, they can put more money in terms of hiring more workers and making sure that they're getting good pay.

So that's what all these tough decisions are about: reversing the forces that have hurt the middle class for a long, long time and building an economy where anybody, if you work hard, you can get ahead. That's what plants like this have always been about. It's not that it's easy

work. But it means if you work hard, you've got a chance to buy a home, you've got a chance to retire, you've got a chance to send your kids to school, you have a chance to maybe take a little vacation once in a while. That's what people strive for. And that's what will make the 21st century an American century, just like the last century was.

But I didn't run for President to go back to where we were. I want us to go forward. I want us to go towards the future. I want us to get us to where we need to be. I want to solve problems, not just put them off. I want to solve problems. And we've got to do more to create more good, middle class jobs like the ones folks have here.

That means we've got to do everything we can to prepare our children and our workers for the competition that they're going to face. We should be doing everything we can to help put some sort of advanced education within reach for more young people. Not everybody has got to go to a 4-year college, but just looking at the equipment around here, you've got to have a little bit of advanced training. It may come through a community college, or it may come through a technical school, but we've got to make sure you can get that education, your kids can get that education, without going broke—[*applause*]—without going broke, without going into debt. So we're working on that.

Another thing we should be working on: fixing a broken immigration system. When you think about this whole region, a lot of folks forget, but almost everybody who worked in that plant a hundred years ago came from someplace else. And so we've got now a new generation of hopeful, striving immigrants; we've got to make sure that they come legally and that we do what we need to secure our borders, but we've also got to make sure that we're providing them opportunity just like your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents received when they arrived at this plant. And that's important. And by the way, it will help our economy grow, because then they're paying taxes and helping to invest and build here in America.

We should do everything we can to revitalize American manufacturing. Manufacturing is—that's the hub of our economy. When our manufacturing base is strong, the entire economy is strong. A lot of service jobs depend on servicing manufacturing jobs. And typically, manufacturing jobs pay a little bit better. So that's been a path, a ticket to the middle class. So when we make steel and cars, make them here in America, that helps. Like I said, work may be hard, but it gives you enough money to buy a home and raise a kid, retire and send your kids to school.

And those kinds of jobs also tell us something else. It's not just how much you get in your paycheck, it's also a sense of, "I'm making something, and I'm helping to build this country." It helps establish a sense of—that we're invested in this country. It tells us what we're worth as a community. One of your coworkers, Mike Longa—where's Mike?

Audience member. Right here.

The President. Is he back here? That's Mike right there. Mike grew up here. His mom and dad worked at this plant. This plant helped put Mike and four brothers and/or sisters through college. And once this plant started growing again, Mike got his chance to be a steelworker here and provide for his own two young kids. So it's a generational thing, and I want to keep that going.

In my State of the Union Address, I talked about how we created America's first manufacturing innovation institute right here in Ohio. Marcy Kaptur has been a big proponent of this because she knows how important manufacturing is. I want to create more of them: places where businesses are working with universities and they're partnering to figure out what are the new manufacturing techniques that keep us at the cutting edge so that China or Germany don't get ahead of us in terms of the equipment that's being invested. We want to be at the cutting edge so what we're producing is always the best steel, it's always the best cars. But that requires research and investment.

And your Senator, Sherrod Brown, helped us to create that first manufacturing hub in Youngstown. And he's now leading a bipartisan

effort with Senator Blunt of Missouri to move more of these manufacturing innovation hubs all across the country. And Congress should pass Sherrod's bill. We should be doing everything we can to guarantee the next revolution in manufacturing happens right here in Cuyahoga, happens right here in Ohio, happens right here in America.

And let me make one last point. We have to do everything we can to make sure every American has access to quality, affordable health care, period. You may have read, we had some problems last month with websites. I'm not happy about that. And then I had a press conference today, and I said, you know what, we fumbled the ball in terms of the rollout.

But we always knew this was going to be hard. There's a reason why folks had tried to do it for a hundred years and hadn't done it. And it's complicated. There are a lot of players involved. The status quo is entrenched. And so yes, there's no question, the rollout on the Affordable Care Act was much tougher than we expected. But I want everybody here to understand, I am going to see this through. I want millions of Americans to make sure that they're not going broke when they get sick and they can go to a doctor when their kid gets sick. And we're not apologizing for that. We are going to get this done.

So we're going to get the website working the way it's supposed to. The plans are already out there that are affordable, and people can get tax credits. We're going to help folks whose old plans have been canceled by the insurers—many of them weren't very good—and we're going to make sure that they can get newer, better options.

But we're not going to go back to the old system because the old system was broken. And every year, thousands of Americans would get dropped by—dropped from coverage or denied their medical history or exposed to financial ruin. You guys are lucky that you work at a company with a strong union that gives you good health benefits. But you know friends and family members who don't have it, and you know what it's like when they get sick. You know what it's—how scary it is for them when they get sick. Or some of them have health insurance—they think they do—and they get sick, and suddenly, the insurance company says: "Oh, I'm sorry, you owe $50,000. That's not covered." Or they jack up your premium so you can't afford it because you had some sort of preexisting condition. That happens every day.

So we're not going to let that happen. We're not going to let folks who pay their premiums on time get jerked around. And we're not going to walk away from the 40 million Americans without health insurance. We are not going to gut this law. We will fix what needs to be fixed, but we're going to make the Affordable Care Act work. And those who say they're opposed to it and can't offer a solution, we'll push back.

I've got to give your Governor a little bit of credit. John Kasich, along with a lot of State legislators who are here today, they expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. And think about that. Just that one step means as many as 275,000 Ohioans are going to have health insurance. And it doesn't depend on a website. That's already happening because of the Affordable Care Act.

And I think it's fair to say that the Governor didn't do it because he just loves me so much. [*Laughter*] I mean, we don't agree on much, but he saw: well, this makes sense. Why wouldn't we do this? Why wouldn't we make sure that hundreds of thousands of people right here in Ohio have some security? It was the right thing to do. And by the way, if every Republican Governor did what Kasich did here rather than play politics about it, you'd have another 5.4 million Americans who could get access to health care next year, regardless of what happens with the website. That's their decision not to do it. And it's the wrong decision. They've got to go ahead and sign folks up.

So the bottom line is, sometimes, we just have to set aside the politics and focus on what's good for people. What's good to grow our middle class? What's going to help keep plants like this growing? What's going to make sure we're putting more people back to work?

What's going to really make a difference in terms of our kids getting a great education?

And look, we've done it before. That's the good news. The good news is that America is—look, we make mistakes. We have our differences. Our politics get screwed up sometimes. Websites don't work sometimes. [*Laughter*] But we just keep going.

Audience members. That's right.

The President. We didn't become the greatest nation on Earth by accident. We did it because we did what it took to make sure our families could succeed, make sure our businesses could succeed, make sure our communities could succeed. And if you don't believe me, listen to one of your coworkers.

So Sherrod Brown, earlier this year, brought a special guest along with him to the State of the Union Address, one of your coworkers, Cookie Hall. Where's Cookie? Is Cookie here?

Audience member. No, she's back at the hall.

The President. She's back at the hall working. [*Laughter*] Well, let me say something nice about her behind her back. [*Laughter*] So Cookie said, one of—let me make sure I can find this. She said—that night she said: "If I get a chance to meet President Obama, I'll tell him my greatest pride is in our 12,000—2012 production record at Cleveland Works. We're the most productive steelworkers in the world." More than a ton of steel produced for every single one of the workers at this plant. That's pretty good. [*Applause*] That's pretty good.

So all of you are an example of what we do when we put our minds to it. This plant was closed for a while. We go through hard times. And a lot of our friends are still going through hard times. But when we work at it, we know we can get to a better place, and we can restore some security to a middle class that was forged in plants just like this one and keep giving ladders of opportunity for folks who were willing to work hard to get into the middle class. That's what I'm about. That's what this plant is about. I'm proud to be with you.

And as long as I have the honor of being your President, I'm going to be waking up every single day thinking about how I can keep on helping folks like the ones who work in this plant.

God bless you. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:38 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas Scott and Cookie Hall, steelworkers, Lakshmi N. Mittal, chairman and chief executive office, Mark M. Kovach, finishing division manager, Gary L. Grimes, Sr., safety advocate, and Margaret Krolikowski, finishing quality manager, ArcelorMittal.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
November 14, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you.

Now, I've got my own version of this. [*Laughter*] If David and Rhonda had just hosted one of my first fundraisers after I'd been elected to the United States Senate, that would have been enough. *Dayenu*. [*Laughter*] If they had been—just hosted one of my first Presidential fundraisers, *dayenu*. [*Laughter*] I have been here so much—[*laughter*]—the only thing I haven't done in this house is have Seder dinner. [*Laughter*] But they have just been such great friends, and I'm so grateful to them, and I really appreciate it.

In addition to David and Rhonda, I want to just acknowledge a couple of other folks here. You've got an outstanding mayor here in Philadelphia, Mr. Michael Nutter. We're very, very proud of him. And you also have in your presence not just two of our best legislators, but two of my favorite people, period. They are gentlemen. They are in public service for the

right reasons. They are what's called workhorses as opposed to show horses in Congress. And they've got wonderful families. Part of the reason I may just like them so much is, they've got a lot of daughters. [*Laughter*] And so we've got that dad-bonding thing. But I'm so glad to call them my friends, and we're lucky to have them: your own Bob Casey and Michael Bennet from Colorado. So thrilled to have them here.

One of the benefits of this kind of format is that I don't have to make a long speech, but instead we can have a dialogue, have an interaction. So let me just make some brief remarks at the top.

I think David made a critical point, which is, as President of the United States, everybody says, well, the most powerful office on Earth is yours, and yet almost everything I do depends on the hard work and cooperation of Members of Congress. And that's hard to find sometimes in this political environment.

But we have been blessed with a Democratic Senate that cares about the issues that so many of you have been working for so long. We could not have brought the economy back from the brink had it not been for people like Bob and Michael being in a position to take some very tough votes. Right now the auto industry bailout is very popular. At the time, it polled at about 10 percent. But they knew it was the right thing to do. It was because of them that we were able to make progress on issues like health care reform. It's because of them that we were able to make sure that young people got more help when it came to dealing with college costs. It was because of them that we were able to get rid of "don't ask, don't tell."

And so that list of accomplishments, obviously I take great pride in, but it is really a partnership. And particularly at a time when Washington is so polarized, if we do not have at minimum a Democratic Senate, it is very hard to see how we can make some of the advances that we need to make on work that is still undone. And I've got 3 years left in this office. In addition to fixing a website—[*laughter*]—I would—I want to make sure that we're rebuilding our infrastructure all across the country. I want to make sure that we are investing in early childhood education that we know gives us the biggest bang for the buck in assuring that every child in this country is prepared for a career in the 21st century.

I still want to make sure that we are building on all the success we've had in promoting an all-of-the-above energy strategy: not just oil and gas, but solar and wind and biofuels. I want to make sure that in our foreign policy that we can continue to pursue peace and diplomacy, not just in the Middle East, but around the world.

And to do all that, in addition to getting Deputy Assistant Secretaries of whatever agency you want confirmed, I've got to have a Democratic Senate to do it. And the only way that we're going to be able to succeed in that task is if all of you step up. The way the Senate works, the way these elections work, there are cycles, and the maps are laid out, and each election cycle a certain number of Senators are up. And this time out, we've got what is considered a tough map. Most of the seats that are contested are Democratic seats in States, some of which I won, some of which I lost, but all of which are tough. And so it's going to be very important for us to be able to get our message out over the next year. And for you guys to step up the way you have is extraordinary.

So I want to say thank you, but I also want to remind you of something that a dear friend of mine, Ab Mikva, that used to be a Congressman from the North Shore of Chicago and went on to be a Federal judge, White House Counsel, has had a storied career—he was one of my early mentors when I was thinking about elective office. He said that being friends with a politician is like having a child perpetually in college. [*Laughter*] Every so often, you just have to write this really big check. [*Laughter*] And it seems like it never ends. In the case of a child in college, it does end; in the case of politicians, it does not. [*Laughter*] So the analogy breaks down. But we are going to need all of you to really push hard because the stakes could not be higher.

Last point I'll make, and then I want to open it up for questions. Obviously, this year and

over the last 3 years, we've seen a level of polarization that seems unique. But the truth is, is that as you travel around the country, the country—ordinary folks aren't as polarized as Washington would make us think.

Audience member. Thank God.

The President. Thank God, yes. That's important. But the only way that we advance the issues that people around the country care about is if we synch up the spirit and the goodness and the decency of the American people with our politics. And there is a whole bunch of stuff that mitigates against that: gerrymandering and the way campaigns are financed and super PACs and the Balkanization of the media. All of that pushes us apart.

What can bring us together is when we've got people like Bob and we've got people like Michael who are principled and strong, but also recognize that before we became Democrats or Republicans, we were Americans. And so if we want that kind of politics, we've got to fight for it, and we've got to pay for it. And all of you have stepped up in the past, and I'm grateful that you're going to be willing to step up in the future as well.

So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:24 p.m. at the residence of David L. and Rhonda R. Cohen. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Michael F. Bennet, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Health Insurance Executives
November 15, 2013

Well, I want to welcome the executives who are here from a lot of the insurance companies that are participating in the marketplace. We all share a similar value, which is, we want to make sure that Americans have good, solid coverage that gives them the security they need for themselves and their family members if and when they get sick.

And we know the demand is out there for that. We had, despite all the problems with the website, over a million people apply. Many multiples of that wanted to see what options were available. Obviously, because of the problems with the website, some folks have been blocked from seeing the well-priced benefits that are available in the marketplace, and so we're working 24/7 to get it fixed. The website is working a lot better now than it was a couple of weeks ago.

And what we're going to be doing is brainstorming on how do we make sure that everybody understands what their options are. Because of choice and competition, a whole lot of Americans who have always seen health insurance out of risk—or out of reach are going to be in a position to purchase it. And because of the law, we're also going to be able to provide them help even if they are still having trouble purchasing that insurance. But they've got to know what those options are in order to be successful.

So I appreciate all these folks coming in. We're going to be soliciting ideas from them. This is going to be a collaborative process. We want to make sure that we get this done so that in the years to come, every American is going to have the kind of affordable health care that they all deserve.

Thank you very much for being here. Appreciate you guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Birth of the Founder of Sikhism
November 15, 2013

I want to extend my best wishes to all our Sikh friends, across the United States and around the world, who this weekend are observing the anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Guru. This sacred time is an occasion to reflect on Guru Nanak's timeless teachings and the principles that are at the heart of Sikhism, including the equality of all human beings, the pluralism we cherish in diverse societies, and the compassion we owe one another. Here in the United States, we're grateful to the many Sikh Americans who give life to these values and enrich our country every day, reminding us that these shared principles are not only at the heart of the Sikh faith, they are central to who we are as Americans.

The President's Weekly Address
November 16, 2013

Hi, everybody. On Thursday, I visited a steel plant in Cleveland, Ohio, to talk about what we're doing to rebuild our economy on a new foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. One area where we've made great progress is American energy. After years of talk about reducing our dependence on foreign oil, we are actually poised to control our own energy future.

Shortly after I took office, we invested in new American technologies to reverse our dependence on foreign oil and double our wind and solar power. And today, we generate more renewable energy than ever, with tens of thousands of good, American jobs to show for it. We produce more natural gas than anyone, and nearly everyone's energy bill is lower because of it. And just this week, we learned that for the first time in nearly two decades, the United States of America now produces more of our own oil here at home than we buy from other countries.

That's a big deal. That's a tremendous step towards American energy independence.

But this is important too: We reached this milestone in part not only because we're producing more energy, but because we're wasting less energy. We set new fuel standards for our cars and trucks so that they'll go twice as far on a gallon of gas by the middle of the next decade. That's going to save an average driver more than $8,000 at the pump over the life of a new car. We also launched initiatives to put people to work upgrading our homes, businesses, and factories so that they waste less energy. That's going to save our businesses money on their energy bills. And that's money they can use to hire more workers.

Here's another thing. Between more clean energy and less wasted energy, our emissions of dangerous carbon pollution are actually falling. That's good news for anyone who cares about the world we leave to our kids.

And while our carbon emissions have been dropping, our economy has been growing. Our businesses have created 7.8 million new jobs in the past 44 months. It proves that the old argument that we can't strengthen the economy and be good stewards of our planet at the same time is a false choice. We can do both. And we have to do both.

More good jobs. Cheaper and cleaner sources of energy. A secure energy future. Thanks to the grit and resilience of American businesses and the American people, that's where we're heading. And as long as I'm President, that's where we're going to keep heading: to leave our children a stronger economy and a safer planet.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:15 p.m. on November 15 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast on November 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 16.

Statement on the Inauguration of Giorgi Margvelashvili as President of the Republic of Georgia
November 16, 2013

On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Georgia as they celebrate the Inauguration of a new President and mark the first time a Presidential transition has taken place as the result of a peaceful, democratic election. I extend my warm congratulations to President Giorgi Margvelashvili on his Inauguration day.

The path to this day was marked by the contributions of many distinguished political leaders over the past 20 years, including outgoing President Mikheil Saakashvili and Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, who have both played a vital role in strengthening Georgia's democratic institutions, together with civil society and the people of Georgia. We appreciate what these two leaders have accomplished during their respective tenures and look forward to working with their successors to continue the strong and deep bonds that the United States and Georgia have enjoyed for over 20 years.

Georgia is making significant progress in consolidating democratic institutions, including through its commitments under the Open Government Partnership and its promotion of women's participation in public life, and is moving forward on the path to fulfilling its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. As we mark this momentous political transition, I call on all of Georgia's political leaders to work together and continue to work with civil society to build on this achievement.

Statement on Senate Action To Block the Nominations of Patricia A. Millett, Cornelia T.L. "Nina" Pillard, and Robert L. Wilkins To Be Judges on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit
November 18, 2013

I am deeply disappointed that Senate Republicans have once again refused to do their job and give well-qualified nominees to the Federal bench the yes-or-no votes they deserve. The DC Circuit, considered the Nation's second highest court, has three vacancies. These are judgeships created by Congress. Chief Justice John Roberts and the Judicial Conference of the United States believe that these vacancies should be filled, not removed. And my constitutional duty as President is to nominate highly qualified individuals to fill these vacancies.

Patricia Millett, Nina Pillard, and Judge Robert Wilkins have all received the highest possible rating from the nonpartisan American Bar Association. They have broad bipartisan support, and no one has questioned their merit. Yet Senate Republicans have blocked all three from receiving a yes-or-no vote. This obstruction is completely unprecedented. Four of my predecessor's six nominees to the DC Circuit were confirmed. Four of my five nominees to this court have been obstructed.

When it comes to judicial nominations, I am fulfilling my constitutional responsibility, but Congress is not. Instead, Senate Republicans are standing in the way of a fully functioning judiciary that serves the American people.

The American people and our judicial system deserve better. A majority of the United States Senate supports these three extraordinary nominees, and it is time for simple yes-or-no votes without further obstruction or delay.

Remarks to the Wall Street Journal CEO Council and a Question-and-Answer Session

November 19, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you.

Well, it is wonderful to be here, and I always look forward to an opportunity to speak to some of our top businesses across the country, who are hiring people, investing in America, making the economy run. And many of you I've had a chance to interact with before. As you know, oftentimes, when I do something like this, I want to spend more time answering questions and having a conversation than giving any formal remarks. Let me just provide a little bit of an introduction.

Obviously, over the last couple of months, most of the oxygen in this town has been consumed with two things: one, the Government shutdown and the possibility of default that was ultimately resolved; and the second has been the rollout of the Affordable Care Act and the fact that my website is not working the way it's supposed to. [*Laughter*] And it's entirely legitimate that those have been issues of great concern.

The impact of the shutdown and the threat of default, I think, not only did some significant damage to the economy at a time when we didn't need self-inflicted wounds, but it also spoke to some of the larger problems we've seen here in Washington and the sense of dysfunction and the seeming incapacity of both parties in Congress to work together to advance an agenda that's going to help us grow.

With respect to the Affordable Care Act, I think people are legitimately concerned because we have a major problem with health care in this country: 41 million people without health insurance, a lot of people underinsured. And once again, how we fix a health care system that's been broken for too many people for too long, I think, ends up speaking to how much confidence we have in Government and whether we still have the capacity, collectively, to bring about changes that are going to be good for our economy, good for our businesses, good for the American people.

I do want to say, though, that beyond the headlines, we have made real progress in the economy, and sometimes, that hasn't gotten enough attention. Some of the tough decisions that we made early on have paid off, decisions that helped us not only recover from a crisis, but begin to lay a stronger foundation for future growth.

We refocused on manufacturing exports, and today, our businesses sell more goods and services made in America than ever before around the world. After a decade of shedding jobs, our manufacturing sector has now added about half a million new jobs, and it's led by an American auto industry that has come roaring back after decades of decline.

We decided to reverse our dependence on foreign oil, and today, we generate more renewable energy than ever before and more natural gas than anybody in the world. And for the first time in nearly 20 years, America now produces more of our own oil than we buy from other countries.

When I took office, we invested a fraction of what other countries did in wireless infrastructure, and today, it's up nearly 50 percent, helping companies unleash jobs, innovation, and a booming app economy that's created more than 500,000 jobs. When I took office, only 5 percent of the world's smartphones ran on American operating systems. Today, more than 80 percent do.

And it's not just in the high-tech economy that we're seeing progress. For example, American farmers are on pace to have one of their best years in decades, and they have consistently been able to export more, make more profits, and help restore rural economies than when we came into office.

And yes, we decided to take on a broken health care system. And even though the rollout of the new health care marketplace has been rough, to say the least, about half a million Americans are now poised to gain health care coverage beginning January 1. That's after

only a month of signup. We also have seen health care costs growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Employer-based health costs are growing at about one-third of the rate of a decade ago, and that has an impact on your bottom line.

And after years of trillion-dollar deficits, we reined in spending, wound down two wars, and began to change a Tax Code that I believed was too skewed towards the wealthiest among us at the expense of the middle class. And since office—since I took office, we have now cut our deficits by more than half.

Add it all up, and businesses like yours have created 7.8 million new jobs over the past 44 months. We've gone farther and recovered faster than most other advanced nations. And so in a lot of ways, America is poised for a breakout. We are in a good position to compete around the world in the 21st century.

Now, the question is, are we going to realize that potential? And that means that we've still got some more work to do. Our stock markets and corporate profits are soaring, but we've got to make sure that this remains a country where everyone who works hard can get ahead. And that means we've still got to address long-term unemployment. We still have to address stagnant wages and stagnant incomes.

And frankly, we've got to stop governing by crisis here in this town. Because if it weren't for Washington's dysfunction, I think all of us agree we'd be a lot further along. The shutdown and the threat of default harmed our jobs market; they cost our economy about $5 billion. And economists predict it will slow our GDP growth this quarter. And it didn't need to happen. It was self-inflicted. We should not be injuring ourselves every few months. We should be investing in ourselves. And in a sensible world, that starts with a budget that cuts what we don't need, closes wasteful loopholes, and helps us afford to invest in the things that we know will help businesses like yours and the economy as a whole: education, infrastructure, basic research and development.

We would have a grand bargain for middle class jobs that combines tax reform with a financing mechanism that lets us create jobs, rebuilding infrastructure that your businesses depend on, but we haven't gotten as much takeup from the other side as we'd like to see so far. We have the opportunity for bipartisan authority to negotiate the best trade deals possible so businesses and workers can take advantage of new markets that are opening up around the world. We haven't seen the kind of takeup from the other side that we'd like to see so far.

We've got the opportunity to fix a broken immigration system that strengthens our economy and our national security. The good news here is, the Senate has already passed a bipartisan bill that economists say would grow our economy by $1.4 trillion and shrink our deficits by nearly a trillion over the next two decades. You wouldn't turn down a deal that good, and Congress shouldn't either. So I'm hoping that Speaker Boehner and the House of Representatives can still work with us to get that done.

And we need to be going all out to prepare our kids and our workers for the demands of a 21st-century economy. I've proposed giving every child an early start at success by making high-quality preschool available to every 4-year-old in America. We know that you get more bang for the buck when it comes to early childhood education than just about anything else, and you've got great examples around the country—oftentimes in red States—that are doing just that. We need to make that same investment.

We're working to bring down the costs of a college degree so more young people can get a higher education. And one thing that I'm very excited about—and this has been a good example of a public-private partnership—is the idea of redesigning our high schools to make sure that more young people get hands-on training and develop the skills that they need, particularly in math, science, and engineering, that businesses are looking for. And in fact, today we're announcing a competitive grant program that will encourage more high schools to partner with colleges and local businesses to better prepare our kids for college or a career. And in December, I'll be bringing together college presidents and other leaders to figure out ways

to help more low-income students attend and to succeed in college.

So just to sum up, my basic message is this: We know what the challenges are. We know what the solutions are. Some of them are tough, but what's holding us back is not a lack of good policy ideas or even what used to be considered good bipartisan policy ideas. We just have to break through the stubborn cycle of crisis politics and start working together. More obstruction, more brinksmanship won't help anybody. It doesn't help folks politically. My understanding is, nobody in this town is doing particularly well at the moment when it comes to the opinions of the American people, but it certainly doesn't help anybody economically.

On many of the issues, I think you and I would agree, and I want you to know that I'm rooting for your success, and I look forward to making sure that we are able in the remaining 3 years that I'm President to work together to not only improve the business climate, but also improve the prospects for Americans all across the country who have been treading water, feel like they're losing ground, are anxious about the future and their children's futures, but I think are still hopeful and still possess that fundamental American optimism. If they see leadership working across the board on their behalf, then I'm confident that we can make enormous progress.

So with that, why don't we get Jerry up here, and I'll start answering his questions. I hope you've had some input. [*Laughter*] If he starts asking me about what happened to the Kansas City Chiefs, the—[*laughter*]. I'm not sure I'll have a good answer for that one.

Wall Street Journal Washington Bureau Chief Gerald F. Seib. Well, thank you, Mr. President. Let me start by thanking you officially for joining us today. I think you probably see a lot of familiar faces out there, most friendly, most of them. And I would also note that you're getting here a little late. Congressman Paul Ryan is coming later. He is going to get here a little early. So if you guys overlap a little bit, maybe we can just get some problems solved right here. What do you think?

The President. Let's do it. [*Laughter*] Let's do it.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Federal Government Procurement Policies

Mr. Seib. It's your chance. [*Laughter*] We have talked amongst ourselves or tried to sort of take the sense of the room. So I'm going to try to reflect some of the conversations that have been going on here in the questions I'm going to ask you. You'll not be stunned that I'm going to ask you about health care first.

The President. Right.

Mr. Seib. You indicated there and you've indicated publicly quite clearly that the rollout has been difficult. What do you think you've learned from this experience about the Government's ability to do this sort of thing, about the law itself, or about your own administration?

The President. Well, there are a couple of things. Number one is that this has been a big problem for a very long time, and so it was always going to be challenging not just to pass a law, but also to implement it. There's a reason why, despite a century of talking about it, nobody had been able to successfully try to deal with some of the underlying problems in the health care system.

The good news is that many of the elements of the Affordable Care Act are already in place and are working exactly the way they're supposed to. So making sure that consumers who have employer-based health insurance are getting a better deal and that are protected from some of the fine print that left them in the lurch when they actually got sick, that's in place. Making sure that young people under the age of 26 can stay on their parent's plan, that's helped 3 million children already. That's making a difference. Helping seniors to get better prescription drug prices, that's already helped millions of seniors and billions of dollars in savings. Rebates for people who see insurance companies who are not spending enough on actual care, more on administrative costs or profits, they're getting rebates. They may not know it's the Affordable Care Act that's giving them rebates, but it's happening.

So there were a number of things that were already in place over the last 3 years that got implemented effectively.

The other thing that hasn't been talked about a lot is cost. There was a lot of skepticism when we passed the Affordable Care Act that we were going to be giving a lot of people care, but we weren't doing anything about the underlying costs. And in fact, over the last 3 years, we have seen health care costs grow at the slowest pace in 50 years. And that affects the bottom lines of everybody here.

And there are a lot of smart delivery system reforms that slowly, across the system, are being implemented, and they're making a big difference. And that's saving us money. That's why, by the way, some of the projections that in terms of what the Affordable Care Act would do to deficits have actually proved even better than we had originally expected.

What I have learned, though, with respect to setting up these marketplaces—which are essentially mechanisms where people who are currently in the individual market or don't have health insurance at all can join together, shop, and insurance companies will compete for their business—setting those things up is very challenging just mechanically. The good news is that choice and competition has actually worked and insurers came in with bids that were even lower than people expected, about 16-percent lower than had originally been projected.

The challenge has been just making sure that consumers are actually able to get on a website, see those choices, and shop. And I think that we probably underestimated the complexities of building out a website that needed to work the way it should.

There is a larger problem that I probably—speak personally, but also as the administration—could have identified earlier, and that is, the way the Federal Government does procurement and does IT is just generally not very efficient. In fact, there's probably no bigger gap between the private sector and the public sector than IT.

And we've seen that in, for example, the VA and the Department of Defense trying to deal with electronic medical records for our servicemen as they move into civilian life. Most of that stuff is still done on paper. We've spent billions of dollars—I'm not saying "we" as in my administration; I mean we've now had about a decade of experimentation—spent billions of dollars, and it's still not working the way it should.

So what we probably needed to do on the front end was to blow up how we procure for IT, especially on a system this complicated. We did not do that successfully. Now, we are getting it fixed, but it would have been better to do it on the front end rather than the back end.

And the last point I'll make is that in terms of expectation setting, there's no doubt that in an environment in which we had to fight tooth and nail to get this passed, it ended up being passed on a partisan basis, not for lack of trying—because I met with an awful lot of Republicans to try to get them to go along—but because there was just ideological resistance to the idea of dealing with the uninsured and people with preexisting conditions. There was a price to that, and it was that what was already going to be hard was operating within a very difficult political environment. And we should have anticipated that that would create a rockier rollout than if Democrats and Republicans were both invested in success.

One of the problems we've had is one side of Capitol Hill is invested in failure, and that makes, I think, the kind of iterative process of fixing glitches as they come up and fine-tuning the law more challenging. But I'm optimistic that we can get it fixed.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Healthcare.gov Website

Mr. Seib. Well, that's the question I was going to ask next. Is it possible you've lost enough time here and enough potential customers in the exchanges that you're not going to reach the critical mass of signups that you need to make the marketplace work? Is that a danger that you have to worry about right now?

The President. Well, it's something that we have to pay attention to. But keep in mind that this model of marketplaces was based on what

was done in Massachusetts, and the experience in Massachusetts was that in the first month, a hundred and fifty-three or sixty-three people signed up out of an ultimate 36,000. I mean, it was less than 1 percent signed up in that first month, partly because buying insurance is a complicated process for a lot of people. When they have more choices, it means that they're going to take more time.

There's no doubt that we've lost some time, but the website is getting better each week. By the end of this month, it will be functioning for the majority of people who are using it. They'll be able to shop, see what their choices are. The prices are good. The prices are not changing for—during the open enrollment period that goes out until March. And so I think that we're going to have time to catch up.

What's also been expressed as a concern is the mix of people that sign up. So we might end up having millions of people sign up; they're happy with their new coverage, but we've got more people who are older, more likely to get sick than younger and healthier.

Mr. Seib. Right.

The President. We've got to monitor that carefully. We always anticipated, though, that younger folks would be the last folks in, just because—it's been a while since you and I were young—but as I recall, you don't think that you're going to get sick at that time.

So look, I am confident that the model that we've built, which works off of the existing private insurance system, is one that will succeed. We are going to have to, A, fix the website so everybody feels confident about that. We're going to have to obviously remarket and rebrand, and that will be challenging in this political environment.

But keep in mind, in the first month, we also had 12 million people visit the site.

Mr. Seib. Yes.

The President. The demand is there. There are 41 million people who have health—who don't have health insurance. The folks in the individual market, many of them are going to get a much better deal in the marketplaces. And so we've just got to keep on improving the customer experience and make sure that we're fending off efforts not to fix the problem, because if somebody wants to help us fix it, I'm all game, but fending off efforts to completely undermine it.

Federal Budget/Deficit and National Debt

Mr. Seib. Let me turn to the economy, the broader economy, probably the predominant concern of people in this room. We seem to be stuck in an economic growth pattern of okay, but not great growth. Your friend Larry Summers was here earlier today and said essentially the problem—or one of the problems—is that the system can't do two things at once. It can't cut deficits and spur growth. It needs to do one or the other. Right now it needs to spur growth, should not worry so much about deficits. Do you agree? And if you do agree, how do you make that happen?

The President. Actually, Larry and I, and most of my economic team—in fact, all of my economic team—have consistently maintained that there is a way to reconcile the concerns about debt and deficits with the concerns about growth.

What we know is, is that our fiscal problems are not short-term deficits. Our discretionary budget, that portion of the Federal budget that isn't defense or Social Security or Medicare or Medicaid—the entitlement programs—is at its smallest level in my lifetime, probably since Dwight Eisenhower. We are not lavishly spending on a whole bunch of social programs out there. And in many ways, a lot of these programs have become more efficient and pretty effective.

Defense, we spent a lot from 2001 to 2011, but generally, we are stabilizing. And the Pentagon, working with me, have come up with plans that allow us to meet our security needs while still bringing down some of the costs of defense, particularly after having ended the war in Iraq and on the brink of ending the war in Afghanistan.

So when we talk about our deficit and debt problems, it is almost entirely health care costs. You eliminate the delta, the difference between what we spend on health care and what every other country—advanced industrialized

nation—spends on health care, and that's our long-term debt. And if we're able to bend the cost curve, we help solve the problem.

Now, one way to do that is just to make health care cheaper overall. That's, I think, the best way to do it, and that's what we've been doing through some of the measures in the Affordable Care Act. There are some other provisions that we could take that would maintain our commitment to seniors, Medicare, Social Security, the disabled, and Medicaid, while still reducing very modestly the costs of those programs.

If we do those things, that solves our real fiscal problem, and we could take some of that money, a very modest portion on the front end, and invest in infrastructure that puts people back to work, improve our research and development.

So the idea would be do some things in the short term that focus on growth, do some things in the long term that deal with the long-term debt. That's what my budget reflects. That's what a multiple series of negotiations with John Boehner talked about, the so-called grand bargain. We couldn't quite get there in the end, mainly because Republicans had a great deal of difficulty with the idea of putting in more revenue to balance out some of the changes that were made on entitlements.

Tax Reform

Mr. Seib. I would guess a lot of people in this room would say another way to make some of those things happen would be to fix the corporate Tax Code that everybody agrees is a mess. You've got some companies that pay way too much compared to their international competitors; some companies don't pay at all. It's not a good system, it's not an efficient system, everybody agrees, but it doesn't ever seem to change. Can you make it change? And can you do something about repatriation of U.S. assets overseas?

The President. Well, here is the good news, is that both my administration and Republicans have talked about corporate tax reform. And Paul Ryan, who is going to be coming after me, said he's interested in corporate tax reform. And we've reached out to him, and we've said let's get to work. We put forward a very specific set of proposals that would lower the corporate tax rate, broaden the base, close some loopholes. And in terms of international companies and competitiveness, what we've said is, rather than a whole bunch of tangled laws that incentivize folks to keep money overseas, let's have a modest, but clear global minimum tax, get rid of some of the huge fluctuations that people experience. It will save companies money, make them more competitive, and in terms of transitioning to that system, actually allow some people to bring back money and, in a one-time way, help us finance infrastructure and some other projects that need to get done.

I don't expect Republicans to adopt exactly the proposal that we've put forward. But there's not that much separation between what Democrats are talking about—I know Chairman Max Baucus put out something today, the chairman of the Finance Committee—what Dave Camp over in the House has talked about. This should be bridgeable.

The one thing I would caution is—and I've said this to the Business Roundtable and other corporate leaders who I've talked to—people like the idea of corporate tax reform in theory. In practice, if you want to make the corporate tax reform deficit neutral, then you actually have to close some loopholes. And people like the idea of a simpler tax system until it's their particular loophole that's about to get closed.

And what we can't afford to do is to keep all the loopholes that are currently in place and lower the corporate tax rate. We would then blow another hole in the deficit that would have to be filled. And what I'm not willing to do is to have higher rates on the middle class in order to pay for that.

Immigration Reform

Mr. Seib. Some of the CEOs here had a working group earlier today, the mission of which was to address the question of how do you stay competitive. Interestingly, at least to me, their first priority—first priority—was this: immigration reform. "The U.S. needs immigration reform to retain talented workers educat-

ed in the U.S. and attract talent to the U.S. Immigration reform could provide an instant jolt to the U.S. economy which we need."

I know you agree with that statement, but it's hard to see that happening right now. You've got the Senate off on one track; it's passed a comprehensive bill the House won't even agree to take up. Democrats want to do comprehensive reform; Republicans want to do step-by-step reform. It's a poisonous political atmosphere. Can you make it happen?

The President. I am actually optimistic that we're going to get this done. I'm a—but I am a congenital optimist. I would have to be. I'm named Barack Obama; I ran for President. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Seib. And won.

The President. And won twice. [*Laughter*]

So look, keep in mind, first of all, that what the CEOs here said is absolutely right. This is a boost to our economy. Everywhere I go, I meet with entrepreneurs and CEOs who say, I've got these terrific folks, they just graduated from CalTech or MIT or Stanford, they're ready to do business here, some of them have these amazing new ideas that we think we can commercialize, but they're being dragged back to their home countries, not because they want to go, but because the immigration system doesn't work.

The good news is that the Senate bill was a bipartisan bill. And we know what the component parts of this are. We've got to have strong border security. We've got to have better enforcement of existing laws. We've got to make sure that we have a legal immigration system that doesn't cause people to sit in the queue for 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, in some cases, 20 years. We should want to immediately say to young people who we've helped to educate in this country: You want to stay? We want you here.

And we do have to deal with about 11 million folks who are in this country, most of them just seeking opportunity; they did break the law by coming here or overstaying their visa, and they've got to earn their way out of the shadows—pay a fine, learn English, get to the back of the line, pay their backtaxes—but giving them a mechanism whereby they can get right by our society. And that's reflected in the Senate bill.

Now, I actually think that there are a number of House Republicans—including Paul Ryan, I think, if you ask him about it—who agree with that. They're suspicious of comprehensive bills, but you know what? If they want to chop that thing up into five pieces, as long as all five pieces get done, I don't care what it looks like, as long as it's actually delivering on those core values that we talk about.

Immigration Reform/Bipartisanship

Mr. Seib. But Democrats have been pretty suspicious that all five pieces would get done.

The President. And that's the problem. I mean, the key is, what we don't want to do is simply carve out one piece of it—let's say agricultural jobs, which are important, but is easier, frankly, or the high-skilled jobs that many in your audience here would immediately want to do—but leave behind some of the tougher stuff that still needs to get done. We're not going to have a situation in which 11 million people are still living in the shadows and potentially getting deported on an ongoing basis.

So we're going to have to do it all. In my conversations with the Republicans, I actually think the divide is not that wide. So what we just have to do is find a pathway where Republicans in the House, in particular, feel comfortable enough about process that they can go ahead and meet us.

This, by the way, Jerry, I think is a good example of something that's been striking me about our politics for a while. When you go to other countries, the political divisions are so much more stark and wider. Here in America, the difference between Democrats and Republicans, I—we're fighting inside the 40-yard line, maybe in——

Mr. Seib. You've fooled most people on that in the last few months, I'd say, but—[*laughter*].

The President. No, no, but—well, no, no. I would distinguish between the rhetoric and the tactics versus the ideological differences. I mean, in most countries you've got—people call me a Socialist sometimes, but no, you've

got to meet real Socialists. [*Laughter*] You'll have a sense of what a Socialist is. [*Laughter*]

I'm talking about lowering the corporate tax rate. My health care reform is based on the private marketplace. The stock market is looking pretty good last time I checked. And it is true that I'm concerned about growing inequality in our system, but nobody questions the efficacy of market economies in terms of producing wealth and innovation and keeping us competitive.

On the flip side, most Republicans, even the Tea Party—one of my favorite signs during the campaign was folks hoisting a sign, "Government, keep your hands off my Medicare." [*Laughter*] Think about that. [*Laughter*] I mean, the—ideologically, they did not like the idea of the Federal Government, and yet they felt very protective about the basic social safety net that had been structured.

So my simple point is this: If we can get beyond the tactical advantages that parties perceive in painting folks as extreme and trying to keep an eye always on the next election and, for a while at least, just focus on governing, then there is probably 70-percent overlap on a whole range of issues. A lot of Republicans want to get infrastructure done, just like I do. A lot of them believe in basic research, just like I do. A lot of them want to reform entitlements to make sure that they're affordable for the next generation; so do I. A lot of them say they want to reform our tax system; so do I.

There are going to be differences on the details, and those details matter, and I'll fight very hard for them. But we shouldn't think that somehow the reason we've got these problems is because our policy differences are so great.

Federal Government Shutdown/Public Debt Limit/U.S. Competitiveness

Mr. Seib. Well, the details are obviously important enough to shut down the Government just a couple of weeks ago. And everybody knows we're headed back toward showdowns again: January, budget; February, debt ceiling.

The President. Right.

Mr. Seib. Jack Lew was here earlier, your Treasury Secretary, and said he thought maybe the system crossed a threshold in October and has realized it doesn't want to go back and do that again. Are you confident it's not going to go back and do that again? And by the way, the OECD, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, suggested today that the U.S. just get rid of the debt ceiling entirely. Would you be in favor of that?

The President. I think that the way our system is set up is like a loaded gun, and once people thought we can get leverage on policy disputes by threatening default, that was an extraordinarily dangerous precedent. And that's a principle that I had to adhere to, not just for me, but for the next President, that you're not going to be able to threaten the entire U.S. or world economy simply because you disagree with me about a health care bill.

I'd like to believe that the Republicans recognize that was not a good strategy, and we're probably better off with a system in which that threat is not there on a perpetual basis. I do not foresee what we saw in October being repeated in January. But the broader point is one that I think all of us have to take to heart. We have to be able to disagree on policy issues without resorting to the kinds of extreme tactics that end up hurting all of us.

And that's been my main disagreement with a lot of my Republican friends. And frankly, the American people agree with that. They don't expect us to march in lockstep. There's a reason why we've got two parties in this country. They do expect that we are constantly thinking about how are we making sure they can find a job that pays well, that their kids can go to college and afford it, that we are growing and competitive, that we are dealing with our fiscal position in a sensible way. And if we keep them in mind consistently, then I think we're going to be successful.

One thing—you've got some international CEOs here, and I think they'll confirm this—when I travel, what's striking to me is, people around the world think we've got a really good hand. You just take the example of energy. They say America is poised to change our geopolitics entirely because of the advances we've made in oil production and natural gas produc-

tion. It means manufacturing here is much more attractive than it used to be. That's a huge competitive advantage.

We've got the most productive workers just about in the world, and we've—our workers have become more and more productive, and a lot of companies look at that and say we wish we had workers who were able to operate the way these folks do.

Our university systems, our research infrastructure—all those things are the envy of the world. And one of the great things about America—sometimes, we get worried that we're losing traction and the sky is falling, and back in the eighties, Japan was about to take over, and then China, and obviously before that, the Soviet Union—and we usually come out okay because we change and we adapt. I just want everybody to remember that we're in a very strong position to compete as long as our political system functions. It doesn't have to be outstanding. This is sort of like Winston Churchill, two cheers for democracy. And it's always going to be messy. But it's got to function better than it has.

Iran

Mr. Seib. I'm in the red zone on the clock here, but let me—I did want to ask a question about international affairs. You've mentioned the world and the U.S. position in it. There's the possibility this week of an agreement with Iran, a preliminary, limited agreement in which they would freeze some of their nuclear activities in return for some relief on sanctions. Your Israeli friends have been arguing, along with some of your friends as well as your foes in Congress, that if you give the Iranian regime any relief on sanctions, the sanctions regime will fall apart, countries that don't want to be there in the first place will head for the exits, it will all come apart, and that's the danger of what you're negotiating right now.

I know you talked to some Senators about this very topic today. Is there going to be a deal? And why can you ease sanctions without having them fall apart?

The President. Well, just by way of background, when I came into office, we had a trade embargo; the U.S. had done some things unilaterally. We did not have a strong, enforceable international mechanism to really put the squeeze on Iran around its nuclear program, despite the fact that it had violated a range of U.N. and nonproliferation treaty requirements.

So we built, we constructed, with the help of Congress, the strongest sanctions regime ever. And it has put a bite on the Iranian economy. They have seen a 5-percent contraction the last year in their economy. It's projected to be another contraction this year. And in part because the sanctions have been so effective, we were able to get Iran to seriously come to the table and look at, how are they going to give assurances to the international community that they are, in fact, not pursuing a nuclear weapons program?

I don't know if we'll be able to close a deal this week or next week. We have been very firm with the Iranians even on the interim deal about what we expect. And some of the reporting out there has been somewhat inaccurate, understandably, because the P–5-plus-1, the members of the—permanent members of the Security Council in addition to—and Germany as well—have kept the negotiations fairly tight.

But the essence of the deal would be that they would halt advances on their nuclear program; they would roll back some elements that get them closer to what we call breakout capacity, where they can run for a weapon before the international community has a chance to react; that they would subject themselves to more vigorous inspections even than the ones that are currently there, in some cases, daily inspections.

In return, what we would do would be to open up the spigot a little bit for a very modest amount of relief that is entirely subject to reinstatement if, in fact, they violated any part of this early agreement. And it would purchase a period of time—let's say, 6 months—during which we could see if they could get to the end state of a position where we, the Israelis, the international community could say with confidence, Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

Now, part of the reason I have confidence that the sanctions don't fall apart is because we're not doing anything around the most powerful sanctions. The oil sanctions, the banking sanctions, the financial services sanctions—those are the ones that have really taken a big chunk out of the Iranian economy. So oil production and oil sales out of Iran have dropped by more than half since these sanctions were put in place. They've got over a hundred billion dollars of oil revenue that is sitting outside of their country. The rial, their currency, has dropped precipitously. And all those sanctions and the architecture for them don't go anywhere.

Essentially, what we do is, we allow them to access a small portion of these assets that are frozen. Keep in mind, though, that because the oil and banking sanctions stay in place, they will actually still be losing money even during this 6-month period relative to the amount of oil sales they had back in 2011.

So what we are suggesting both to the Israelis, to Members of Congress here, to the international community, but also to the Iranians, is, let's look, let's test the proposition that over the next 6 months we can resolve this in a diplomatic fashion, while maintaining the essential sanctions architecture, and as President of the United States, me maintaining all options to prevent them from getting nuclear weapons. I think that is a test that is worth conducting.

And my hope and expectation is not that we're going to solve all of this just this week in this interim phase, but rather that we're purchasing ourselves some time to see how serious the Iranian regime might be in reentering membership in the world community and taking the yoke of these sanctions off the backs of their economy.

Mr. Seib. Well, Mr. President, with that, let me just thank you again for joining us. I appreciate it very much.

The President. I enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:28 p.m. at the Four Seasons Hotel Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Lawrence H. Summers, former Director, National Economic Council.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom
November 20, 2013

The President. Good morning! Good morning, everybody! Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, on behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. This is one of my favorite events every year, especially special this year, as I look at this extraordinary group of individuals and our opportunity to honor them with our Nation's highest civilian honor: the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

And this year, it's just a little more special because this marks the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy establishing this award. We're honored, by the way, today to have with us one of my favorite people, Ethel Kennedy, and a pretty good basketball player, President Kennedy's grandson Jack.

Now, this medal has been bestowed on more than 500 deserving people. Tonight I'm looking forward to joining some of these honorees, as well as members of the Kennedy family, as we pay tribute to these 50 years of excellence. And this morning we're honored to add 16 new names to this distinguished list.

Today we salute fierce competitors who became true champions. In the sweltering heat of a Chicago summer, Ernie Banks walked into the Cubs locker room and didn't like what he saw. "Everybody was sitting around, heads down, depressed," he recalled. So Ernie piped up and said: "Boy, what a great day! Let's play two!" [*Laughter*] That's "Mr. Cub," a man who came up through the Negro Leagues, making $7 a day, and became the first Black player to suit up for the Cubs and one of the greatest hitters of all time. And in the process, Ernie became known as much for his 512 home runs as for his cheer and his optimism and his eter-

nal faith that someday, the Cubs would go all the way. [*Laughter*]

And that's serious belief. [*Laughter*] That is something that even a White Sox fan like me can respect. [*Laughter*] But he is just a wonderful man and a great icon of my hometown.

Speaking of sports, Dean Smith is one of the winningest coaches in college basketball history, but his successes go far beyond X's and O's. Even as he won 78 percent of his games, he graduated 96 percent of his players. The first coach to use multiple defenses in a game, he was the pioneer who popularized the idea of "pointing to the passer." After a basket, players should point to the teammate who passed them the ball. And with his first national title on the line, he did have the good sense to give the ball to a 19-year-old kid named Michael Jordan. [*Laughter*] Although, they used to joke that the only person who ever held Michael under 20 was Dean Smith. [*Laughter*]

While Coach Smith couldn't join us today due to an illness that he's facing with extraordinary courage, we also honor his courage in helping to change our country. He recruited the first Black scholarship athlete to North Carolina and helped to integrate a restaurant and a neighborhood in Chapel Hill. That's the kind of character that he represented on and off the court.

We salute innovators who pushed the limits of science, changing how we see the world and ourselves. And growing up, Sally Ride read about the space program in the newspaper almost every day, and she thought this was "the coolest thing around." When she was a Ph.D. candidate at Stanford, she saw an ad for astronauts in the student newspaper, and she seized the opportunity. As the first American woman in space, Sally didn't just break the stratospheric glass ceiling, she blasted through it. And when she came back to Earth, she devoted her life to helping girls excel in fields like math, science, and engineering. "Young girls need to see role models," she said. "You can't be what you can't see." Today, our daughters—including Malia and Sasha—can set their sights a little bit higher because Sally Ride showed them the way.

Now, all of us have moments when we look back and wonder, "What the heck was I thinking?" I have that—[*laughter*]—quite a bit. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman has made that simple question his life's work. In a storied career in Israel and America, he basically invented the study of human decisionmaking. He's helped us to understand everything from behavioral economics to "Does living in California make people happy?" It's an interesting question. He's also been called an expert on irrational behavior, so I'm sure that he could shed some light on Washington. [*Laughter*]

But what truly sets Daniel apart is his curiosity. Guided by his belief that people are "endlessly complicated and interesting," at 79, he's still discovering new insights into how we think and learn, not just so we understand each other, but so we can work and live together more effectively.

Dr. Mario Molina's love of science started as a young boy in Mexico City, in a homemade laboratory in a bathroom at home. And that passion for discovery led Mario to become one of the most respected chemists of his era. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize—or the Nobel Prize, rather, not only for his pathbreaking research, but also for his insistence that when we ignore dangerous carbon emissions, we risk destroying the ozone layer and endangering our planet. And thanks to Mario's work, the world came together to address a common threat, and today, inspired by his example, we're working to leave our planet safer and cleaner for future generations.

We also have to salute musicians, who bring such joy to our lives. Loretta Lynn was 19 the first time she won the big—she won big at the local fair. Her canned vegetables brought home 17 blue ribbons—[*laughter*]—and made her "Canner of the Year." [*Laughter*] Where's Loretta? Now, that's impressive. [*Laughter*]

For a girl from Butcher Hollow, Kentucky, that was fame. Fortunately for all of us, she decided to try her hand at things other than canning. Her first guitar cost $17, and with it, this coal miner's daughter gave voice to a generation, singing what no one wanted to talk about and saying what no one wanted to think about.

And now, over 50 years after she cut her first record—and canned her first vegetables—[*laughter*]—Loretta Lynn still reigns as the rule-breaking, record-setting queen of country music.

As a young man in Cuba, Arturo Sandoval loved jazz so much it landed him in jail. It was the cold war, and the only radio station where he could hear jazz was the Voice of America, which was dangerous to listen to. But Arturo listened anyway. Later, he defected to the United States knowing he might never see his parents or beloved homeland again. "Without freedom," he said, "there is no life." And today, Arturo is an American citizen and one of the most celebrated trumpet players in the world. "There isn't any place on Earth where the people don't know about jazz," he says, and that's true in part because musicians like him have sacrificed so much to play it.

We salute pioneers who pushed our Nation towards greater justice and equality. A Baptist minister, C.T. Vivian was one of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s closest advisers. "Martin taught us," he says, "that it's in the action that we find out who we really are." And time and again, Reverend Vivian was among the first to be in the action: in 1947, joining a sit-in to integrate an Illinois restaurant; one of the first Freedom Riders; in Selma, on the courthouse steps to register Blacks to vote, for which he was beaten, bloodied, and jailed. Rosa Parks said of him, "Even after things had supposedly been taken care of and we had our rights, he was still out there, inspiring the next generation, including me," helping kids go to college with a program that would become Upward Bound. And at 89 years old, Reverend Vivian is still out there, still in the action, pushing us closer to our founding ideals.

Now, early in the morning the day of the March on Washington, the National Mall was far from full and some in the press were beginning to wonder if the event would be a failure. But the march's chief organizer, Bayard Rustin, didn't panic. As the story goes, he looked down at a piece of paper, looked back up, and reassured reporters that everything was right on schedule. The only thing those reporters didn't know was that the paper he was holding was blank. [*Laughter*] He didn't know how it was going to work out, but Bayard had an unshakable optimism, nerves of steel, and most importantly, a faith that if the cause is just and people are organized, nothing can stand in our way.

So for decades, this great leader, often at Dr. King's side, was denied his rightful place in history because he was openly gay. No medal can change that, but today we honor Bayard Rustin's memory by taking our place in his march towards true equality, no matter who we are or who we love.

Speaking of game-changers, disrupters, there was a young girl named Gloria Steinem who arrived in New York to make her mark as a journalist, and magazines only wanted her to write articles like "How To Cook Without Really Cooking for Men." [*Laughter*] Gloria noticed things like that. [*Laughter*] She's been called a "champion noticer." She's alert to all the ways, large and small, that women had been and, in some cases, continue to be treated unfairly just because they're women.

As a writer, a speaker, an activist, she awakened a vast and often skeptical public to problems like domestic violence, the lack of affordable childcare, unfair hiring practices. And because of her work across America and around the world, more women are afforded the respect and opportunities that they deserve. But she also changed how women thought about themselves. And Gloria continues to pour her heart into teaching and mentoring. Now, her one piece of advice to young girls is—I love this—"Do not listen to my advice. Listen to the voice inside you and follow that."

When Patricia Wald's law firm asked if she'd come back after having her first child, she said she'd like some time off to focus on her family, devoted almost 10 years to raising 5 children. But Patricia never lost the itch to practice law. So while her husband watched the kids at home, she'd hit the library on weekends. At the age of 40, she went back to the courtroom to show the "young kids" a thing or two. As the first female judge on the DC Circuit, Patricia was a top candidate for Attorney General. Af-

ter leaving the bench, her idea of retirement was to go to the Hague to preside over the trials of war criminals. Patricia says she hopes enough women will become judges that "it's not worth celebrating" anymore. But today we celebrate her. And along with Gloria, she shows there are all kinds of paths listening to your own voice.

We salute communicators who shined a light on stories no one else was telling. A veteran of World War II and more than a dozen Pacific battles, Ben Bradlee brought the same intensity and dedication to journalism. Since joining the Washington Post 65 years ago, he transformed that newspaper into one of the finest in the world. With Ben in charge, the Post published the Pentagon Papers, revealing the true history of America's involvement in Vietnam; exposed Watergate; unleashed a new era of investigative journalism, holding America's leaders accountable and reminding us that our freedom as a nation rests on our freedom of the press. When Ben retired, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put the admiration of many into a poem:

> O rare Ben Bradlee
> His reign has ceased
> But his nation stands
> Its strength increased

And I also indicated to Ben, he can pull off those shirts, and I can't. [*Laughter*] He always looks so cool in them. [*Laughter*]

Early in Oprah Winfrey's career, her bosses told her she should change her name to Susie. [*Laughter*] I have to pause here to say I got the same advice. [*Laughter*] They didn't say I should be named "Susie," but they suggested I should change my name. [*Laughter*] People can relate to Susie; that's what they said. It turned out, surprisingly, that people could relate to Oprah just fine.

In more than 4,500 episodes of her show, her message was always: "You can. You can do, and you can be, and you can grow, and it can be better." And she was living proof, rising from a childhood of poverty and abuse to the pinnacle of the entertainment universe. But even with 40 Emmys, the distinction of being the first Black female billionaire, Oprah's greatest strength has always been her ability to help us discover the best in ourselves. Michelle and I count ourselves among her many devoted fans and friends. As one of those fans wrote, "I didn't know I had a light in me until Oprah told me it was there." What a great gift.

And finally, we salute public servants who've strengthened our Nation. Daniel Inouye was a humble man and didn't wear his Medal of Honor very often. Instead, he liked to wear a pin representing the Good Conduct Medal he earned as a teenage private. "To behave yourself takes special effort," he said, "and I did not want to dishonor my family." Danny always honored his family and his country, even when his country didn't always honor him.

After being classified as an enemy alien, Danny joined a Japanese American unit that became one of the most decorated in World War II. And as the second longest serving Senator in American history, he showed a generation of young people—including one kid with a funny name growing up in Hawaii who noticed that there was somebody, during some of those hearings in Washington, that didn't look like everybody else, which meant maybe I had a chance to do something important too—he taught all of us that no matter what you look like or where you come from, this country has a place for everybody who's willing to serve and work hard.

A proud Hoosier, Dick Lugar has served America for more than half a century, from a young Navy lieutenant to a respected leader in the United States Senate. I'll always be thankful to Dick for taking me—a new, junior Senator—under his wing, including travels together to review some of his visionary work, the destruction of cold war arsenals in the former Soviet Union, something that doesn't get a lot of public notice, but was absolutely critical to making us safer in the wake of the cold war.

Now, I should say, traveling with Dick, you get close to unexploded landmines, mortar shells, test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague. [*Laughter*] His legacy, though, is the thousands of missiles and bombers and submarines and warheads that no longer threaten us

because of his extraordinary work. And our Nation and our world are safer because of this statesman. And in a time of unrelenting partisanship, Dick Lugar's decency, his commitment to bipartisan problem-solving, stand as a model of what public service ought to be.

Now, last, but never least, we honor a leader who we still remember with such extraordinary fondness. He still remembers as a child waving goodbye to his mom—tears in her eyes—as she went off to nursing school so she could provide for her family. And I think lifting up families like his own became the story of Bill Clinton's life. He remembered what his mom had to do on behalf of him, and he wanted to make sure that he made life better and easier for so many people all across the country that were struggling in those same ways and had those same hopes and dreams. So as a Governor, he transformed education so more kids could pursue those dreams. As President, he proved that, with the right choices, you could grow the economy, lift people out of poverty. We could shrink our deficits and still invest in our families, our health, our schools, science, technology. In other words, we can go farther when we look out for each other.

And as we've all seen, as President, he was just getting started. He doesn't stop. He's helped lead relief efforts after the Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the Haiti earthquake. His Foundation and Global Initiative have helped to save or improve the lives of literally hundreds of millions of people. And of course, I am most grateful for his patience during the endless travels of my Secretary of State. [*Laughter*]

So I'm grateful, Bill, as well for the advice and counsel that you've offered me on and off the golf course—[*laughter*]—and most importantly, for your lifesaving work around the world, which represents what's the very best in America. So thank you so much, President Clinton.

So these are the recipients of the 2013 Presidential Medal of Freedom. These are the men and women who in their extraordinary lives remind us all of the beauty of the human spirit, the values that define us as Americans, the potential that lives inside of all of us. I could not be more happy and more honored to participate in this ceremony here today.

With that, what I would like to do is invite our honorees to just sit there and let all of us stand and give you a big round of applause. [*Applause*]

Audience members. Hurray!

The President. Hey! Hey!

All right. I guess we should actually give them the medals though. [*Laughter*] So where are my—here we go. Lee, you want to hit it?

[*At this point, Maj. S. Lee Meyer, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.*]

The President. [*Inaudible*]—the Medal of Freedom honorees, please. [*Applause*] Hey!

All right. Well, that concludes the formal part of today's ceremony. I want to thank all of you for being here. Obviously, we are deeply indebted to those who we honor here today. And we're going to have an opportunity to take some pictures with the honorees and their family members.

The rest of you, I understand, the food here is pretty good. [*Laughter*] So I hope you enjoy the reception, and I hope we carry away from this a reminder of what JFK understood to be the essence of the American spirit, that it's represented here. And some of us may be less talented, but we all have the opportunity to serve and to open people's hearts and minds in our smaller orbits. So I hope everybody has been as inspired, as I have been, participating and being with these people here today.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ethel Kennedy, sister-in-law, and John Schlossberg, grandson, of former President John F. Kennedy; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Charles Scott, former guard, NBA's Phoenix Suns; Daniel Kahneman, senior scholar, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton

University; Mario J. Molina, professor of chemistry and biochemistry, University of California–San Diego; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Remarks at a Dinner in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

November 20, 2013

Good evening, everybody. Please have a seat. Michelle and I are so pleased to join you tonight to honor the legacy of an American leader in a building dedicated to the preservation of our American history.

And we are thrilled to be joined by so many people whose accomplishments helped write new chapters in that history. This morning I recognized 16 brilliant, compassionate, wildly talented people with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian award. And that was intimidating enough. Tonight I'm facing dozens of you.

To the Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients of this year and years past, it is a great honor to be with you for this anniversary celebration. To Wayne Clough, thank you for hosting us and for all the Smithsonian does to enrich our cultural heritage. And to Jack, I have to say that our new Ambassador to Japan, I'm sure, would be pleased with how you performed this evening. I'll give her a full report. [*Laughter*] To all the family members of the Kennedy family, we are grateful for your presence and your enduring contributions to the life of our country.

For centuries, awards have existed for military valor. And 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy established a way to award extraordinary civilian virtue: contributions to our country, service to our democracy, a dedication to our humanity that has advanced the common interest of freedom-loving people, both here at home and around the world.

Since its creation, the Presidential Medal of Freedom has paid tribute to the creativity of writers, and artists, and entertainers. We've recognized the leadership of elected officials and civil rights organizers, the imagination of scientists and business leaders, the grit and determination of our astronauts and our athletes. Because there is no one way to contribute to the success of America. What makes us great is that we believe in a certain set of values that encourage freedom of expression and aspiration. We celebrate imagination and education and occasional rebellion. And we refuse to set limits on what we can do or who we can be.

And other peoples in other times have marked their history by moments of conquest at war, by dominion over empires. But in the arc of human history, the American experience stands apart, because our triumph is not simply found in the exertion of our power, it's found in the example of our people. Our particular genius over 237 years has been something more than the sum of our individual excellence, but rather a culmination of our common endeavors.

It's a truth that resonated with President Kennedy when he said, ". . . I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we . . . will be remembered not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit."

And that unbending belief that the power to make great a nation is found in its people and in their freedom, that was his philosophy. That is his legacy.

And it's a legacy told in villages around the world that have clean water or a new school and a steady friend in the United States, thanks to the volunteers of the Peace Corps. It's a legacy found in the courage of all who serve under our proud flag, willing, like President Kennedy himself, to pay any price and bear any burden for the survival and success of our liberty.

It's a legacy on display in the arts and culture that he and Jackie championed as part of our national character, a legacy planted on the Moon that he said that we'd visit and that we did, in the stars beyond, but also in the

breakthroughs of the generations of scientists that his audacious promise inspired.

It's a legacy continued by his brothers and his sisters, who have left this a more gentle and compassionate country. Jean, a Medal of Freedom recipient herself and a diplomat in every sense, is with us tonight. Bobby, whose wife Ethel is one of my dearest friends; as Jack noted, we'd be celebrating Bobby's 88th birthday today. Eunice and Pat were devoted advocates for Americans of all abilities. And Teddy, the youngest brother with the biggest heart, he was a happy warrior who never forgot who we were sent here to serve and waged a decades-long battle on behalf of those folks who sent us here: for workers' rights and immigrants' rights and the right to affordable health care. Tonight our sympathies are with the love of Teddy's life, Vicki, as she mourns the loss of her father, Judge Edmund Reggie.

And it's all told a legacy of service that the Kennedy family continues to this day: from Caroline, who's already drawing crowds of her own as she settles into her role as Ambassador in Japan; to his great-nephew, and Massachusetts' newest Congressman, Joe Kennedy; to the school of public service that bears the family name and teaches its young leaders how they too might one day pass the torch to a new generation.

This is a legacy of a man who could have retreated to a life of luxury and ease, but who chose to live a life in the arena, sailing sometimes against the wind, sometimes with it. And that's why, 50 years later, John F. Kennedy stands for posterity as he did in life: young and bold and daring. And he stays with us in our imagination not because he left us too soon, but because he embodied the character of the people that he led: resilient, resolute; fearless and fun-loving; defiant in the face of impossible odds; and most of all, determined to make the world anew, not settling for what is, but rather for what might be. And in his idealism—his sober, square-jawed idealism—we are reminded that the power to change this country is ours.

This afternoon Michelle and I were joined by President Clinton and Secretary Clinton to pay tribute to that proud legacy. We had a chance to lay a wreath at the gravesite at Arlington, where President Kennedy is surrounded by his wife and younger brothers, and where he will rest in peace for all time, remembered not just for his victories in battle or in politics, but for the words he uttered all those years ago: "We will be remembered for our contribution to the human spirit."

How blessed we are to live in a country where these contributions overflow in ways both heralded and not so heralded. The thousands of people in San Francisco who helped a little boy recovering from cancer live out his superhero dreams, that's part of that spirit. The Marines deploying relief after a devastating typhoon and all across an ocean, people checking on their neighbors after a tornado, the families across the country who will spend Thanksgiving Day cooking feasts so others less fortunate might eat—that's part of the spirit.

That's who we are: a people whose greatness comes not by settling for what we can achieve in our own lives, but also because we dare to ask what we can do, as citizens, to contribute to this grand experiment we call America.

And that's what our Presidential Medal of Freedom honorees embody, each and every one of them who are here today and those who we remember posthumously. That's the living legacy of the Kennedy family. And that is the responsibility we all welcome, as Americans, for our lifetime on this planet.

We are extraordinarily blessed to be Americans because we have the opportunity to serve in ways that so many of you have served, because we have the opportunity to touch lives in the ways that so many of you have touched lives.

God bless you all, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:26 p.m. at the National Museum of American History. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Bouvier Kennedy; Jean Kennedy Smith, sister of former President John F. Kennedy; Ethel Kennedy, widow of former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy; former Rep.

Patrick J. Kennedy II; Victoria Reggie Kennedy, widow of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; and Miles Scott, a 5-year-old cancer patient who, with the help of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, was given an opportunity to be the superhero "Batkid" for a day in San Francisco, CA.

Remarks on Procedural Rule Changes in the Senate
November 21, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. It's no secret that the American people have probably never been more frustrated with Washington. And one of the reasons why that is, is that over the past 5 years, we've seen an unprecedented pattern of obstruction in Congress that's prevented too much of the American people's business from getting done.

All too often, we've seen a single Senator or a handful of Senators choose to abuse arcane procedural tactics to unilaterally block bipartisan compromises or to prevent well-qualified, patriotic Americans from filling critical positions of public service in our system of Government.

Now, at a time when millions of Americans have desperately searched for work, repeated abuse of these tactics have blocked legislation that might create jobs. They've defeated actions that would help women fighting for equal pay. They've prevented more progress than we would have liked for striving young immigrants trying to earn their citizenship. Or it's blocked efforts to end tax breaks for companies that are shipping jobs overseas. They've even been used to block commonsense and widely supported steps to protect more Americans from gun violence, even as families of victims sat in the Senate Chamber and watched. And they've prevented far too many talented Americans from serving their country at a time when their country needs their talents the most.

It's harmed our economy, and it's been harmful to our democracy. And it's brought us to the point where a simple majority vote no longer seems to be sufficient for anything, even routine business, through what is supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body.

Now, I realize that neither party has been blameless for these tactics. They've developed over years, and it seems as if they've continually escalated. But today's pattern of obstruction, it just isn't normal. It's not what our Founders envisioned. A deliberate and determined effort to obstruct everything, no matter what the merits, just to refight the results of an election, is not normal. And for the sake of future generations, we can't let it become normal.

So I support the step a majority of Senators today took to change the way that Washington is doing business, more specifically, the way the Senate does business. What a majority of Senators determined by Senate rule is that they would restore the longstanding tradition of considering judicial and public service nominations on a more routine basis.

And here's why this is important: One of a President's constitutional responsibilities is to nominate Americans to positions within the executive and judicial branches. Over the six decades before I took office, only 20 Presidential nominees to executive positions had to overcome filibusters. In just under 5 years since I took office, nearly 30 nominees have been treated this way. Now, these are all public servants who protect our national security, look out for working families, keep our air and water clean.

This year alone, for the first time in history, Senate Republicans filibustered a President's nominee for the Secretary of Defense who used to be a former Republican Senator. They tried everything they could to hold up our EPA Administrator. They blocked our nominee for our top housing regulator at a time when we need more help for more families to afford a home and prevent what has caused mortgage meltdowns from happening again.

And in each of these cases, it's not been because they opposed the person, that there was some assessment that they were unqualified, that there was some scandal that had been unearthed. It was simply because they opposed

the policies that the American people voted for in the last election.

And this obstruction gets even worse when it comes to the judiciary. The Constitution charges the President with filling vacancies to the Federal bench. Every President has exercised this power since George Washington first named Justices to the Supreme Court in 1789. But my judicial nominees have waited nearly two and a half times longer to receive yes-or-no votes on the Senate floor than those of President Bush. And the ones who eventually do get a vote generally are confirmed with little, if any, dissent.

So this isn't obstruction on substance, on qualifications. It's just to gum up the works. And this gridlock in Congress causes gridlock in much of our criminal and civil justice systems. You've seen judges across the country, including a Bush-appointed Chief Justice to the Supreme Court, say these are vital vacancies that need to be filled and this gridlock has not served the cause of justice; in fact, it's undermined it.

Over the past 3 weeks, Senate Republicans again denied a yes-or-no vote on three highly qualified Americans to fill three vacancies on the Nation's second highest court, even though they have the support of a majority of Senators. Four of President Bush's six nominees to this court were confirmed. Four out of five of my nominees to this court have been obstructed.

So the vote today, I think, is an indication that a majority of Senators believe, as I believe, that enough is enough. The American people's business is far too important to keep falling prey, day after day, to Washington politics.

I'm a former Senator. So is my Vice President. We both value any Senate's duty to advise and consent. It's important, and we take that very seriously. But a few now refuse to treat that duty of advise and consent with the respect that it deserves. It's no longer used in a responsible way to govern. It's rather used as a reckless and relentless tool to grind all business to a halt. And that's not what our Founders intended, and it's certainly not what our country needs right now.

And I just want to remind everybody, what's at stake here is not my ability to fulfill my constitutional duty. What's at stake is the ability of any President to fulfill his or her constitutional duty. Public service is not a game, it is a privilege. And the consequences of action or inaction are very real. The American people deserve better than politicians who run for election telling them how terrible Government is and then devoting their time in elected office to trying to make Government not work as often as possible.

Now, I want to be clear, the Senate has actually done some good bipartisan work this year. Bipartisan majorities have passed commonsense legislation to fix our broken immigration system and upgrade our courts—our ports. It's passed a farm bill that helps rural communities and vulnerable Americans. It's passed legislation that would protect Americans from being fired based on their sexual orientation. So we know that there are folks there, Republican and Democrat, who want to get things done. And frankly, privately they've expressed to me their recognition that the system in the Senate had broken down and what used to be a sporadic exercise of the filibuster had gotten completely out of hand.

I believe—I'm confident—that that spirit will have a little more space now. I want us to make sure that we can do more work together to grow the economy and to create jobs. And if there are differences in the Senate, then debates should be had. People should vote their conscience. They should vote on behalf of their constituents. But they should vote. That's what they're there to do. And ultimately, if you've got a majority of folks who believe in something, then it should be able to pass.

Americans work hard. They do their jobs, and they expect the same from everybody who got sent here. And as long as I have the privilege of being in this office, I'll keep working as hard as I know how to make sure that the economy is growing, and we're creating good jobs, and we're widening prosperity and opportunity for everybody. And I know that that's what the majority of folks in the Senate believe as well. But the gears of Government have to work,

and the step that a majority of Senators took today, I think, will help make those gears work just a little bit better.

Thanks very much, everybody. And now Josh will answer all your questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Melvin L. Watt, in his capacity as Director-designate of the Federal Housing Finance Agency; former President George W. Bush; Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, Jr.; Judge-designates Patricia A. Millett, Cornelia T.L. "Nina" Pillard, and Robert L. Wilkins, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit; and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest.

Remarks at an Event Celebrating the ConnectED Initiative's Champions of Change

November 21, 2013

Well, hello, everybody. Have a seat, have a seat. And thank you, Misa, for the introduction and, more importantly, what you are doing in the classroom every single day, which is making such a big difference. And I want to welcome all of you who are here. This is one of my favorite events we do periodically. It gives me an opportunity to say thanks and recognize people who are making extraordinary contributions in their local communities. And we're learning from you, seeing what works, seeing what has an impact.

We call them Champions of Change: people who have done some innovative work that, hopefully, can be replicated in other parts of the country once they have good models that are having success. And today we are honoring 10 educators who use technology to support one of our country's top priorities, and that's preparing our kids and our workers for the competition that they're going to face in a 21st-century global economy.

In an age when the world's information is just a click away, we've got to bring our schools and our libraries into the 21st century. That's why 5 months ago I launched an initiative that we're calling ConnectED to bring high-speed Internet to 99 percent of American students over the next 5 years. And this is going to be a top priority for me. It's going to take some hard work across my administration, but I'm committed to getting it done.

Because this is not just about wiring schools, it's about changing students' lives. It's about using technology to give students a chance to learn at their own pace, whether they're catching up on a subject or moving ahead to the next level. It's about giving teachers a better data set so they can see exactly what's working and what isn't for particular students. It's about unleashing a new market for educational devices and apps that will create jobs and spur innovation.

And it's about supporting outstanding, innovative educators like our Champions for Change. Because of their work in North Dakota, young people with autism are using educational apps to discover abilities that they didn't even know that they had. In Colorado, preschoolers have now obtained access to a digital discovery center that helps them to get a great education from the earliest age. In Georgia, students at an afterschool technology club are learning skills that are going to help them succeed in college and throughout their careers. And today's Champions of Change are helping to give our students what every parent wants for their child: the chance to go as far as their talents and hard work will take them.

So to all of our Champions for Change, we want to thank you for your extraordinary efforts. As long as I'm President, I'm going to keep working not only to support the great work that educators and librarians are doing across the country, but more fundamentally, to make sure that young people are getting every opportunity that they deserve to thrive and succeed in this modern economy. And I see

some young people here, and they look like they're doing pretty good. [*Laughter*] Although, they may be bored by me making too long a speech. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:28 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Misa Gonzales, English teacher, Desert View High School in Tucson, AZ.

Statement on Signing the HIV Organ Policy Equity Act
November 21, 2013

Earlier today I signed into law the HIV Organ Policy Equity (HOPE) Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation that allows scientists to carry out research into organ donations from one person with HIV to another. For decades, these organ transplants have been illegal. It was even illegal to study whether they could be safe and effective. But as our understanding of HIV and effective treatments have grown, that policy has become outdated. The potential for successful organ transplants between people living with HIV has become more of a possibility. The HOPE Act lifts the research ban, and in time, it could lead to live-saving organ donations for people living with HIV while ensuring the safety of the organ transplant process and strengthening the national supply of organs for all who need them.

Improving care for people living with HIV is critical to fighting the epidemic, and it's a key goal of my National HIV/AIDS Strategy. The HOPE Act marks an important step in the right direction, and I thank Congress for their action.

NOTE: S. 330, approved November 21, was assigned Public Law No. 113–51.

Statement on the Upcoming State Visit of President François Hollande of France
November 22, 2013

Michelle and I look forward to welcoming President Hollande and Valérie Trierweiler on a state visit to the United States, to include a state dinner at the White House on February 11, 2014. The United States and France are close friends and allies, including through NATO, and our countries have worked together to support democracy, liberty, and freedom at home and abroad for more than two centuries. During the visit, we will discuss opportunities to further strengthen the U.S.-France security and economic partnership.

NOTE: The statement referred to Valérie Trierweiler, partner of President Hollande.

Joint Statement by President Obama and King Mohammed VI of Morocco
November 22, 2013

In their meeting today at the White House, President Obama and His Majesty King Mohammed VI reaffirmed the strong and mutually beneficial partnership and strategic alliance between the United States and the Kingdom of Morocco. The two leaders stressed that this important visit provides an opportunity to map out a new and ambitious plan for the strategic partnership and pledged to advance our shared priorities of a secure, stable, and prosperous Maghreb, Africa, and Middle East. The two leaders also emphasized our shared values, mutual trust, common interests, and strong friendship, as reflected throughout our partnership.

Support for Democratic and Economic Reforms

The President commended the action and the leadership of His Majesty the King in deepening democracy and promoting economic progress and human development during the past decade. The President and His Majesty the King reaffirmed their commitment to work together to realize the promise of Morocco's 2011 constitution and explore ways in which the United States can help strengthen Morocco's democratic institutions, civil society, and inclusive governance. The President welcomed the King's commitment to end the practice of military trials of civilians. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the UN human rights system and its important role in protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and committed to deepening the ongoing U.S.-Morocco dialogue on human rights, which has been a productive and valuable mechanism for the exchange of views and information. Noting their shared concern about migrants, refugees, and human trafficking issues worldwide, the President expressed support for Morocco's initiative to reform its asylum and immigration system based on recommendations from Morocco's National Human Rights Commission. The President welcomed Morocco's intent to take concrete steps to qualify for and join the Open Government Partnership and to realize the vision of the Equal Futures Partnership by ensuring women fully participate in public life, and that they lead and benefit from inclusive economic growth.

Economic and Security Cooperation

The two leaders emphasized that the United States and Morocco are dedicated to working together to promote human and economic development in Morocco. They noted the successful conclusion, in September 2013, of Morocco's first Millennium Challenge Compact, and the Compact's positive impact on job creation, economic growth, and human development throughout Morocco. The President highlighted the U.S. Agency for International Development's new development strategy for 2013–2017, designed to help the Moroccan government achieve its reform goals and respond to the needs of Moroccan citizens. This strategy focuses on: enhancing the employability of youth; increasing civic participation in governance; and enhancing educational attainment for children at the primary level.

They noted that the two countries signed a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement on November 21, 2013 to expand bilateral cooperation on the detection of money laundering, trade fraud, and other financial crime. Additionally, on November 21, 2013 the United States and Morocco signed a Trade Facilitation Agreement that furthers the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement and represents a forward-leaning, 21st century agreement on customs reform and modernization. Morocco is our first partner in the region to conclude such an agreement, as well as to endorse joint principles on investment and information communication technology services trade. These important initiatives reflect our common commitment to building stronger economic ties with and among the region.

The President and His Majesty the King recognized the importance of Morocco as a trade and investment platform for North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and the benefits of maintaining an attractive business climate for investment in Morocco. Building on the December 2012 U.S.-Morocco Business Development Conference in Washington, DC, the King noted that planning is underway for a second such Conference to be held in Rabat in 2014. The 2014 Business Development Conference aims to build on business-to-business contacts in aviation, the agriculture and food industry, and energy to expand trade and promote investment, as well as regional economic integration. The President expressed appreciation to the King for offering to host the 2014 Global Entrepreneurship Summit, and both leaders highlighted the importance of fostering broad-based economic opportunity in the region, particularly for young people and women.

Educational and Cultural Cooperation

Applauding their people-to-people ties, the President and His Majesty the King are committed to exploring further cooperation to promote mutual understanding and interfaith dialogue in Morocco and throughout the region. They reiterated their commitment to enhance and diversify exchange programs that include the Moroccan American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange. The President and His Majesty the King underscored the importance of early ratification and implementation of the agreement between the two countries on the registration and status of the system of American schools in Morocco. Both leaders committed to strengthening ties and increasing mutual understanding between Moroccan and American youth. The President commended His Majesty the King for graciously committing to donate $1 million per year over the next 5 years to the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative, which hopes to connect youth from all different age groups in the Middle East and North Africa with youth in the United States through virtual exchange.

The Issue of the Western Sahara

The President pledged to continue to support efforts to find a peaceful, sustainable, mutually agreed-upon solution to the Western Sahara question. U.S. policy toward the Western Sahara has remained consistent for many years. The United States has made clear that Morocco's autonomy plan is serious, realistic, and credible, and that it represents a potential approach that could satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity. We continue to support the negotiations carried out by the United Nations, including the work of the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy Ambassador Christopher Ross, and urge the parties to work toward a resolution. The two leaders affirmed their shared commitment to the improvement of the lives of the people of the Western Sahara and agreed to work together to continue to protect and promote human rights in the territory.

Regional Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation

The leaders noted their partnership on the United Nations Security Council over the past two years in the advancement of international peace and security, including in Mali, the Sahel, Syria, Libya, and the Middle East. They reaffirmed their commitment to continue to deepen civilian and military cooperation in the areas of non-proliferation and counter-terrorism. To address their deep concern for the continuing threat posed by terrorism, the United States and Morocco intend to continue cooperation to bolster democratic criminal justice institutions and to counter the threat of violent extremism in the region. The leaders also reinforced their commitment to regional cooperation initiatives.

The leaders are committed to continuing close cooperation in the Global Counterterrorism Forum and to work to strengthen regional political, economic, and security ties across North Africa and the Sahel, including through a reinvigorated Arab Maghreb Union and other regional forums.

The President encouraged Morocco to join the United States in founding the International Institute of Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta, which intends to train a new generation of criminal justice officials across North, West, and East Africa on how to address counterterrorism and related security challenges through a rule of law framework.

Africa

His Majesty the King thanked the President for the importance given to the promotion of social development and economic prosperity within Africa. The President acknowledged His Majesty the King's leadership and the actions carried out by Morocco in the field of peace keeping, conflict prevention, human development, and the preservation of cultural and religious identity.

In this context, both countries committed to explore joint initiatives to promote human development and stability through food security, access to energy, and the promotion of trade

based on the existing Free Trade Agreement. The two Heads of State were pleased to note their common assessment of the critical role of human and economic development in promoting stability and security on the African continent, and committed to explore in greater detail concrete options for pragmatic, inclusive cooperation around economic and development issues of mutual interest.

Middle East Peace

His Majesty commended the continuous commitment of the President and the efforts of the Secretary of State to advance Middle East peace. The President acknowledged the contribution of His Majesty, Chairman of the Al Quds committee, to the efforts aiming to achieve a two state solution.

Conclusion

The President and His Majesty the King closed the meeting by emphasizing their shared commitment to the special and longstanding relationship between the United States and the Kingdom of Morocco, which in 1777 became the first nation to recognize the independence of the United States. President Obama and King Mohammed VI reaffirmed their commitment to stay in close contact and to continue on a path of increased cooperation that will strengthen the United States-Morocco strategic partnership, including the next meeting of the U.S.-Morocco Strategic Dialogue in Rabat. They each intend to designate a senior official to lead the implementation of the commitments made today, and the President thanked His Majesty the King for his invitation to visit Morocco. Today's meeting demonstrates that the interests of the United States and Morocco continue to converge, and that this historic partnership, which began in the 18th century, continues to thrive well into the 21th century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's Weekly Address
November 23, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past couple of months, most of the political headlines you've read have probably been about the Government shutdown and the launch of the Affordable Care Act. And I know that many of you have rightly never been more frustrated with Washington. But if you look beyond those headlines, there are some good things happening in our economy. And that's been my top priority since the day I walked into the Oval Office.

After decades in which the middle class was working harder and harder just to keep up, and a punishing recession that made it worse, we made the tough choices required not just to recover from the crisis, but to rebuild on a new foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. Five years later, we've fought our way back. Our businesses have created 7.8 million new jobs in the past 44 months. Another 200,000 Americans went back to work last month. The American auto industry has come roaring back with more than 350,000 new jobs, jobs churning out and selling the high-tech, fuel-efficient cars the world wants to buy. And they're leading the charge in a manufacturing sector that has added jobs for the first time since the 1990s, a big reason why our businesses sell more goods and services made in America than ever before.

We decided to reverse our addiction to foreign oil. And today, we generate more renewable energy than ever, more natural gas than anybody, and for the first time in nearly 20 years, America now produces more oil than we buy from other countries.

We decided to fix a broken health care system. And even though the rollout of the marketplace where you can buy affordable plans has been rough, so far about 500,000 Americans are poised to gain health coverage starting

January 1. And by the way, health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years.

One more thing: Since I took office, we've cut our deficits by more than half. And that makes it easier to invest in the things that create jobs: education, research, and infrastructure.

Imagine how much farther along we could be if both parties were working together. Think about what we could do if a reckless few didn't hold the economy hostage every few months or waste time on dozens of votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act rather than try to help us fix it.

In the weeks ahead, I'll keep talking about my plan to build a better bargain for the middle class: good jobs; a good education; a chance to buy a home, save, and retire; and yes, the financial security of affordable health care. And I'll look for any willing partners who want to help.

Because of your hard work and tough sacrifices over the past 5 years, we're pointed in the right direction. But we've got more work to do to keep moving that way. And as long as I'm President, I'll keep doing everything I can to create jobs, grow the economy, and make sure that everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on November 22 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on November 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 23.

Remarks on Iran
November 23, 2013

Good evening. Today the United States, together with our close allies and partners, took an important first step toward a comprehensive solution that addresses our concerns with the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program.

Since I took office, I've made clear my determination to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. As I've said many times, my strong preference is to resolve this issue peacefully, and we've extended the hand of diplomacy. Yet, for many years, Iran has been unwilling to meet its obligations to the international community. So my administration worked with Congress, the United Nations Security Council, and countries around the world to impose unprecedented sanctions on the Iranian Government.

These sanctions have had a substantial impact on the Iranian economy, and with the election of a new Iranian President earlier this year, an opening for diplomacy emerged. I spoke personally with President Rouhani of Iran earlier this fall. Secretary Kerry has met multiple times with Iran's Foreign Minister. And we have pursued intensive diplomacy, bilaterally with the Iranians and together with our P–5-plus-1 partners: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well as the European Union.

Today that diplomacy opened up a new path toward a world that is more secure, a future in which we can verify that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful and that it cannot build a nuclear weapon. While today's announcement is just a first step, it achieves a great deal. For the first time in nearly a decade, we have halted the progress of the Iranian nuclear program, and key parts of the program will be rolled back. Iran has committed to halting certain levels of enrichment and neutralizing part of its stockpiles. Iran cannot use its next-generation centrifuges, which are used for enriching uranium. Iran cannot install or start up new centrifuges, and its production of centrifuges will be limited. Iran will halt work at its plutonium reactor. And new inspections will provide extensive access to Iran's nuclear facilities and allow the international community to verify whether Iran is keeping its commitments.

These are substantial limitations, which will help prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon. Simply put, they cut off Iran's most

likely paths to a bomb. Meanwhile, this first step will create time and space over the next 6 months for more negotiations to fully address our comprehensive concerns about the Iranian program. And because of this agreement, Iran cannot use negotiations as cover to advance its program.

On our side, the United States and our friends and allies have agreed to provide Iran with modest relief, while continuing to apply our toughest sanctions. We will refrain from imposing new sanctions, and we will allow the Iranian Government access to a portion of the revenue that they have been denied through sanctions. But the broader architecture of sanctions will remain in place, and we will continue to enforce them vigorously. And if Iran does not fully meet its commitments during this 6-month phase, we will turn off the relief and ratchet up the pressure.

Over the next 6 months, we will work to negotiate a comprehensive solution. We approach these negotiations with a basic understanding: Iran, like any nation, should be able to access peaceful nuclear energy. But because of its record of violating its obligations, Iran must accept strict limitations on its nuclear program that make it impossible to develop a nuclear weapon.

In these negotiations, nothing will be agreed to unless everything is agreed to. The burden is on Iran to prove to the world that its nuclear program will be exclusively for peaceful purposes.

If Iran seizes this opportunity, the Iranian people will benefit from rejoining the international community, and we can begin to chip away at the mistrust between our two nations. This would provide Iran with a dignified path to forge a new beginning with the wider world based on mutual respect. If, on the other hand, Iran refuses, it will face growing pressure and isolation.

Over the last few years, Congress has been a key partner in imposing sanctions on the Iranian Government, and that bipartisan effort made possible the progress that was achieved today. Going forward, we will continue to work closely with Congress. However, now is not the time to move forward on new sanctions, because doing so would derail this promising first step, alienate us from our allies, and risk unraveling the coalition that enabled our sanctions to be enforced in the first place.

That international unity is on display today. The world is united in support of our determination to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Iran must know that security and prosperity will never come through the pursuit of nuclear weapons. It must be reached through fully verifiable agreements that make Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons impossible.

As we go forward, the resolve of the United States will remain firm, as will our commitments to our friends and allies, particularly Israel and our Gulf partners, who have good reason to be skeptical about Iran's intentions.

Ultimately, only diplomacy can bring about a durable solution to the challenge posed by Iran's nuclear program. As President and Commander in Chief, I will do what is necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But I have a profound responsibility to try to resolve our differences peacefully, rather than rush towards conflict. Today we have a real opportunity to achieve a comprehensive, peaceful settlement, and I believe we must test it.

The first step that we've taken today marks the most significant and tangible progress that we've made with Iran since I took office. And now we must use the months ahead to pursue a lasting and comprehensive settlement that would resolve an issue that has threatened our security—and the security of our allies—for decades. It won't be easy, and huge challenges remain ahead. But through strong and principled diplomacy, the United States of America will do our part on behalf of a world of greater peace, security, and cooperation among nations.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif-Khonsari of Iran.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Medina, Washington

November 24, 2013

Thank you, guys. Sit down. You already did that. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, first of all, let me just thank Jon for the second time for his incredible hospitality. And I think it's fair to say that between Nancy and me and Steve Israel, we do a lot of events. I will say that this particular space is one of the more spectacular venues for an event. And we couldn't have a more gracious host. The only problem when I come to Jon's house is, I want to just kind of roam around and check stuff out, and instead, I've got to talk. [*Laughter*] But, Jon, thank you for your friendship. We're very grateful.

A few other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, our once Speaker and soon to be Speaker again, Nancy Pelosi. We are thrilled to be with her. Someone who has an incredibly thankless job, but does it with energy and wisdom—and I was going to say joy, but I'm not, I don't want to, kind of, overdo it—[*laughter*]—but is doing an outstanding job: Steve Israel, who is heading up the DCCC. Thank you so much, Steve, for the great job that you're doing.

We've got some outstanding Members of Congress here. Congressman Rick Larsen is here. Where's Rick? There he is. Congresswoman Suzan DelBene is here. Congressman Derek Kilmer is here. Where's Derek? There he is—who just informed me that his 4-year-old at the Christmas party is going to sing me at least one patriotic song. [*Laughter*] And I'm very excited about this. She has a repertoire of five songs, and we're trying to hone in on what one song she is going to do.

And you've got a former outstanding Member of Congress, who now is doing a great job as the Governor of this great State; Governor Jay Inslee is here. And Trudi, who's keeping him in line at all times. And I want to thank John Frank, who also spent a lot of time on this event. Thank you so much.

Now, the great thing about these kinds of events is, I spend most of my time in a conversation with you, as opposed to just making a long speech. Let me make a couple of observations. Number one, Jay claims he arranged it, but when we landed, we were flying over Mount Rainier, pulled into the airport, came off the plane, and the sunset was lighting the mountain. And it was spectacular and reminded me of why it is that I love the Pacific Northwest so much.

Now, part of it—I was saying to somebody, part of it may also be that I always feel the spirit of my mom here, because I graduated from Mercer Island High. But you guys have got a good thing going here, and it's not just the Seahawks. I just want to make that point.

Point number two: Obviously, there are such enormous challenges that we face all across this country and internationally, and this year we've seen issues ranging from the tragedy of Sandy Hook to disclosures at the NSA, to the shutdown and the potential of default, to continuing issues surrounding the Middle East and peace there. And so it's understandable, I think, that sometimes, people feel discouraged or concerned about whether or not we can continue to make progress. And one thing that I always try to emphasize is that if you look at American history, there have been frequent occasions in which it looked like we had insoluble problems—either economic, political, security—and as long as there were those who stayed steady and clear eyed and persistent, eventually, we came up with an answer; eventually, we were able to work through these challenges and come out better on the other end.

And that's true today as well. After seeing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, we've now seen 44 straight months of job growth. We've doubled our production of clean energy. We are actually importing less oil than ever before, producing more energy than ever before. We've reduced the pace of our

carbon emissions in a way that is actually better than the vast majority of industrialized nations over the last 5 years.

We've been able to not only create the possibility of all people enjoying the security of health care, but we've also been driving down the cost of health care, which benefits people's pocketbooks, their businesses. Our institutions of higher learning continue to be the best in the world. And you're actually—because of the productivity of our workers, we're actually seeing manufacturing move back to America in ways that we haven't seen in decades.

A lot of the reason that we're making progress is because of the inherent resilience and strength of the American people, but a lot of it is because folks like Nancy Pelosi and some of the Members of Congress, or even former Members of Congress, who are here made some tough decisions early on in my administration. And we're starting to see those bear fruit and pay off.

And so I'm incredibly optimistic about our future. But I'm also mindful of the fact that we have some barriers, some impediments to change and progress. And the biggest barrier and impediment we have right now is a Congress—and in particular, a House of Representatives—that is not focused on getting the job done for the American people, but is a lot more focused on trying to position themselves for the next election or to defeat my agenda.

And that's unfortunate, because that's not what the American people are looking for right now. And the truth is, is that there are a lot of ideas—things like early childhood education or rebuilding our infrastructure or investing in basic science and research—there are a whole range of—immigration reform—a whole range of ideas, that if you strip away the politics, there's actually a pretty broad consensus in this country.

I'm not a particularly ideological person. There are some things, some values I feel passionately about. I feel passionate about making sure everybody in this country gets a fair shake. I feel passionate about everybody being treated with dignity and respect regardless of what they look like or what their last name is or who they love. I feel passionate about making sure that we're leaving a planet that is as spectacular as the one we inherited from our parents and our grandparents. I feel passionate about working for peace even as we are making sure that our defenses are strong.

So there are values I care about. But I'm pretty pragmatic when it comes to how do we get there. And so is Nancy, and so is Jay. And so more than anything, what we're looking for is not the defeat of another party, what we're looking for is the advancement of ideas that are going to vindicate those values that are tried and true and that have led this country to the spectacular heights that we've seen in the past.

But to do that, we're going to need Nancy Pelosi as Speaker, because there's just a lot of work to be done right now. Between now and next November, I'm going to do everything I can and look for every opportunity to work on a bipartisan basis to get stuff done. There will not be a point in time where I've got an opportunity to get something done where I don't do it simply because of politics. But those opportunity have been few and far between over the last several years, and the American people can't afford to wait in perpetuity for us to grow faster, create more jobs, strengthen our middle class, clean our environment, fix our immigration system.

And so if we don't have partners on the other side, we're going to have to go ahead and do it ourselves. And so the support that you're providing today and the support that you've provided time and again is making all the difference in the world. And it's part of what gives me confidence that we're going to be successful over the long term.

So thank you. We appreciate it. And with that, let me take some questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:24 p.m. at the residence of Jon A. Shirley. In his remarks, he referred to Tess Kilmer, daughter of Rep. Derek C. Kilmer; Trudi Inslee, wife of Gov. Jay R. Inslee of Washington; and John E. Frank, vice president and deputy general counsel, Microsoft Corp. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 25. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Betty Ann Ong Chinese Recreation Center in San Francisco, California

November 25, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, hello, San Francisco! It is great to be back in California. It is great to be with all of you. I love San Francisco. You've got great food. You've got great people, beautiful scenery, no more super villains because "Batkid" cleaned up the streets. Love "Batkid." [*Laughter*]

I want to start by thanking Geetha for the wonderful introduction and the great work that she's doing. Give her a big round of applause. I want to thank your Mayor, Ed Lee. Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom. I want to recognize some wonderful Members of Congress who are fighting every day for the people of California: Mike Honda, Eric Swalwell, Judy Chu. They are all doing great work every single day.

We have a special guest, Janet Napolitano, who is now overseeing the entire UC system and going to be doing a great job. We miss her back in Washington, but she is going to be outstanding leading the University of California.

Now, before I begin, I want to say a few words about the news from the weekend. I'm here to talk about immigration reform, but I'm also here in my capacity as Commander in Chief, and this weekend, together with our allies and our partners, the United States reached an agreement with Iran on a first step towards resolving our concerns over its nuclear program.

Now, some of you may recall that when I first ran for President, I said it was time for a new era of American leadership in the world, one that turned the page on a decade of war and began a new era of our engagement with the world. And as President and as Commander in Chief, I've done what I said. We ended the war in Iraq; we brought our troops home. Usama bin Laden met justice; the war in Afghanistan will end next year.

And as the strongest, most powerful nation on the face of the Earth, we've engaged in clear-eyed and principled diplomacy—even with our adversaries—in order to begin to destroy Syria's chemical weapons and to place the first real constraints in a decade on Iran's nuclear program. Because I firmly believe in what President Kennedy once said. He said, "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." I believe that. And this diplomacy, backed by the unprecedented sanctions we brought on Iran, has brought us the progress that was achieved this weekend.

For the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress on Iran's nuclear program. Key parts of the program will be rolled back. International inspectors will have unprecedented access to Iran's nuclear-related facilities. So this will help Iran from building a nuclear weapon. And over the coming months, we're going to continue our diplomacy, with the goal of achieving a comprehensive solution that deals with the threat of Iran's nuclear program once and for all.

And if Iran seizes this opportunity and chooses to join the global community, then we can begin to chip away at the mistrust that's existed for many, many years between our two nations. None of that is going to be easy. Huge challenges remain. But we cannot close the door on diplomacy. And we cannot rule out peaceful solutions to the world's problems. We cannot commit ourselves to an endless cycle of conflict. And tough talk and bluster may be the easy thing to do politically, but it's not the right thing for our security. [*Applause*] It is not the right thing for our security.

Now, this progress, and the potential it offers, reminds us of what is possible when the United States has the courage to lead, not just with the force of arms, but with the strength of our diplomacy and our commitment to peace. That's what keeps us strong. That's what makes us a beacon to the world. That's how I'll continue to lead so long as I'm President of the United States.

And that spirit—not just what we can criticize or tear down or be against, but what we can build together—that's what brings me here today. Because it's long past time to fix our

broken immigration system. We need to make sure Washington finishes what so many Americans just like you started. We've got to finish the job.

And it's fitting that we're here in Chinatown, just a few miles away from Angel Island. In the early 1900s, about 300,000 people—maybe some of your ancestors—passed through on their way to a new life in America. And for many, it represented the end of a long and arduous journey; they'd finally arrived in a place where, they believed, anything was possible.

And for some, it also represented the beginning of a new struggle against prejudice in a country that didn't always treat its immigrants fairly or afford them the same rights as everybody else. Obviously, Asians faced this, but so did the Irish, so did Italians, so did Jews. And many groups still do today.

That didn't stop those brave men and women from coming. They were drawn by a belief in the power of opportunity, in a belief that says, maybe I never had a chance at a good education, but this is a place where my daughter can go to college. Maybe I started out washing dishes, but this is a place where my son can become mayor of San Francisco. Maybe I have to make sacrifices today, but those sacrifices are worth it if it means a better life for my family.

And that's a family story that will be shared by millions of Americans around the table on Thursday. It's the story that drew my great-great-great-great-grandfather from a small village in Ireland and drew my father from a small village in Kenya. It's the story that drew so many of your ancestors here: that America is a place where you can make it if you try.

And here's something interesting: Today, more than one in four residents born outside the United States came here from Asian countries, many through our family immigration system. They're doctors, business owners, laborers, refugees. This rec center's namesake, Betty Ong, was a hero on 9/11. But she was also the daughter of immigrants who grew up not far from here. And we're honored to have her family with us here today.

But too often, when we talk about immigration, the debate focuses on our southern border. The fact is, we're blessed with immigrants from all over the world who've put down roots in every corner of this country. Here in San Francisco, 35 percent of business owners are immigrants, and your economy is among the fastest growing in the country. That's not an accident. That's the impact that our talented, hard-working immigrants can have. That's the difference they can make. They're hungry, and they're striving, and they're working hard, and they're creating things that weren't there before.

And that's why it is long past time to reform an immigration system that right now doesn't serve America as well as it should. We could be doing so much more to unleash our potential if we just fix this aspect of our system.

And I know out here in California that you watch the news and you share the country's not very sunny view of Washington these days. For the last few months, you've seen a lot of headlines about gridlock and partisan bickering, and too often one faction of one party in one House of Congress has chosen courses of action that ended up harming our businesses or our economy or our workers. Or they want to refight old political battles rather than create jobs and grow the economy and strengthen the middle class or take 40 more votes to undermine or repeal the Affordable Care Act—[*laughter*]—instead of passing a single serious jobs bill, despite the fact that Americans want us to focus on jobs and business and growth. And by the way, thousands of Californians are signing up every day for new health care plans all across this State.

So even as we're getting this darn website up to speed—[*laughter*]—and it's getting better—States like California are proving the law works. People want the financial security of health insurance. And even if you're already insured, reach out to a friend or neighbor who's not and help them get covered.

But when it comes to immigration reform, we have to have the confidence to believe we can get this done. And we should get it done. And by the way, most Americans agree. The only thing standing in our way right now is the

unwillingness of certain Republicans in Congress to catch up with the rest of the country.

Now, I met the other day with the CEOs of some of America's business—biggest companies. And I'm positive, not all of them voted for me. [*Laughter*] I'm pretty sure. Maybe some of them, but definitely not all of them. But the thing they wanted to talk about, their top priority was the fact that we invite the brightest minds from around the world to study here—many of them enrolled in the University of California system—and then we don't invite them to stay. We end up sending them home to create new jobs and start new businesses someplace else. So we're training our own competition, rather than invite those incredibly talented young people, like Geetha, to stay here and start businesses and create jobs here.

I hear from folks who have been separated from their families for years because of green card backlogs, desperately want their loved ones to be able to join them here in America. I hear from young DREAMers who are Americans through and through in every way but on paper, and they just want a chance to study and serve and contribute to the Nation that they love.

I talk to business owners who play by the rules, but get frustrated because they end up being undercut by those who exploit workers in a shadow economy: aren't getting paid overtime; aren't required to meet the same obligations. And so those companies end up losing out on business.

Right now I'm seeing brave advocates who have been fasting for 2 weeks in the shadow of the Capitol, sacrificing themselves in an effort to get Congress to act. And I want to say to Eliseo Medina, my friend from SEIU, and the other fasters who are there as we speak, I want them to know, we hear you. We're with you. The whole country hears you.

And there are plenty of leaders—Democrat and Republican—who don't think it's fair that we've got 11 million people in this country, including more than a million from Asia, with no real way to come forward and get on the right side of the law. It's not smart. It's not fair. It doesn't make sense. And we have kicked this particular can down the road long enough. Everybody knows it.

Now, the good news is, we know what the solutions are. There is bipartisan hope of getting it done. This year, the Senate passed an immigration reform bill by a wide, bipartisan majority, and it addresses the key issues that need to be addressed. It would strengthen our borders. It would level the playing field by holding employers accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers. It would modernize our legal immigration system so that we eliminate the backlog of family visas and make it easier to attract highly skilled entrepreneurs from beyond our borders. It would make sure that everybody plays by the same rules by providing a pathway to earned citizenship for those who are living in the shadows, a path that includes passing a background check and learning English and paying taxes and a penalty and getting in line behind everyone trying to come here the right way.

And each of these pieces would go a long way towards fixing our broken immigration system. Each of them has been supported by Democrats and Republicans in the past. There's no reason we can't come together and get it done.

And what's more, we know the immigration reform that we're proposing would boost our economy and shrink our deficits. Independent economists have said that if the Senate bill became law, over the next two decades, our economy would grow by $1.4 trillion more, and it would reduce our deficits by $850 billion more.

And you don't have to be an economist to figure out that workers will be more productive if they've got their families here with them, they're not worried about deportation, they're not living halfway around the world. This isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

Of course, just because something is smart, fair, good for the economy, and supported by business, labor, law enforcement, and faith leaders—[*laughter*]—Democratic and Republican Governors, including the Governor of this State—just because all that is in place doesn't mean we'll actually get it done, because this is

Washington, after all, that we're talking about and everything is looked through a political prism. And look, let's be honest, some folks automatically think, well, if Obama's for it, then I've got to be against it even if I was—before that, I was for it.

But I want to remind everybody, to his great credit, my Republican predecessor, President Bush, was for reform. He proposed reform like this almost a decade ago. I was in the Senate. I joined 23 Senate Republicans back then supporting reform. It's worth remembering that the Senate bill that just passed won more than a dozen Republican votes this past summer. And some of them even forget that I'm—sometimes, people forget, I'm not running for office again. Michelle doesn't forget. [*Laughter*] So you don't have to worry about this somehow being good for me. This is good for the country. It's the right thing to do for the American people.

And I believe, ultimately—not always in the short term—but ultimately, good policy is good politics. Look at the polls right now, because the American people support immigration reform by a clear majority. Everybody wins if we get this done. So there's no reason we shouldn't get immigration reform done right now. None. If there is a good reason, I haven't heard it.

And by the way, if there's a better plan out there than the one that Democrats and Republicans have already advanced together, if there are additional ideas that would make it even better, I'm always willing to listen to new ideas. My door is always open. But right now it's up to Republicans in the House to decide if we can move forward as a country on this bill. If they don't want to see it happen, they've got to explain why.

The good news is, just this past week, Speaker Boehner said that he is "hopeful we can make progress" on immigration reform. And that is good news. I believe the Speaker is sincere. I think he genuinely wants to get it done. And that's something we should be thankful for this week. And I think there are a number of other House Republicans who also want to get this done. Some of them are hesitant to do it in one big bill, like the Senate did. That's okay. They can—it's Thanksgiving; we can carve that bird into multiple pieces. [*Laughter*] A drumstick here—[*laughter*]—breast meat there. But as long as all the pieces get done soon and we actually deliver on the core values we've been talking about for so long, I think everybody is fine with it. They're not worried about the procedures, they just want the result.

But it's going to require some courage. There are some members of the Republican caucus who think this is bad politics for them back home. And they're free to vote their conscience, but what I've said to the Speaker and others is, don't let a minority of folks block something that the country desperately needs. And we can't leave this problem for another generation to solve. If we don't tackle this now, then we're undercutting our own future.

So my message to Congress is, rather than create problems, let's prove Washington can get something done. This is something that has broad-based support. We've been working on it for a decade now. This reform comes as close as we've gotten to something that will benefit everybody, now and for decades to come. And it has the potential to enrich this country in ways that we can't even imagine.

And I'll just give you one example to wrap up. Andrew Ly is here today. Where's Andrew? He's around here somewhere. There he is. Now, Andrew has got an amazing story. Andrew grew up in Vietnam, and he and his four brothers tried three times to flee to the United States. Obviously, the country was going through all kinds of difficulties. So three times, they tried; three times, they failed. On the fourth try, their boat, filled with 140 refugees—is that right, Andrew?—was attacked by pirates.

But the Lys and their family eventually made it to Malaysia, and then they eventually made it here to San Francisco. And they learned English, and they worked as handymen, and they worked as seamstresses. And eventually, Andrew and his brothers earned enough money to buy a small bakery. And they started making doughnuts, and they started selling them to Chinese restaurants. And with

a lot of hard work and a little luck, the Sugar Bowl Bakery today is a $60 million business. [*Applause*] Right?

So these humble and striving immigrants from Vietnam now employ more than 300 Americans. They're supplying pastries to Costco and Safeway and almost every hotel and hospital in San Francisco. And I don't know if Andrew brought me any samples, but—[*laughter*]—they must be pretty good. [*Laughter*]

And Andrew says: "We came here as boat people, so we don't take things for granted. We know this is the best country in the world if you work hard." That's what America is about. This is the place where you can reach for something better if you work hard. This is the country our parents and our grandparents and waves of immigrants before them built for us. And it falls on each new generation to keep it that way. The Statue of Liberty doesn't have its back to the world. The Statue of Liberty faces the world and raises its light to the world.

When Chinese immigrants came to this city in search of Gold Mountain, they weren't looking just for physical riches, they were looking for freedom and opportunity. They knew that what makes us American is not a question of what we look like or what our names are—because our—we look like the world. I mean, you got a President named Obama. [*Laughter*] What makes us American is our shared belief in certain enduring principles, our allegiance to a set of ideals, to a creed, to the enduring promise of this country.

And our shared responsibility is to leave this country more generous, more hopeful than we found it. And if we stay true to that history—if we get immigration reform across the finish line, and it is there, just within our grasp; if we can just get folks in Washington to go ahead and do what needs to be done—we're going to grow our economy, we're going to make our country more secure, we'll strengthen our families, and most importantly——

Audience member. Mr. Obama——

The President. ——most importantly, we will live up——

Audience member. I need your help. My family has been separated for Thanksgiving.

The President. ——most importantly, we will live up to our character as a nation.

Audience member. I have not seen my family Thanksgiving week because my families are separated. I need your help. There are thousands of——

The President. That's exactly what we're talking about here.

Audience member. ——undocumented immigrants that are torn apart every single day.

The President. That's why we're here.

Audience member. So, Mr. President, please use your Executive order to halt deportations for all 11.5 undocumented immigrants in this country right now.

The President. What we're trying——

Audience member. We agree——

Audience member. Obama! Obama! Obama!

Audience member. ——that we need to pass comprehensive immigration reform. At the same time, we have a—you have a power to stop deportation for all——

The President. Actually, I don't.

Audience member. ——undocumented immigrant families in this country.

The President. And that's why we're here.

Audience member. So, please, I need your help.

The President. Okay——

Audience member. Stop deportations!

Audience members. Stop deportations! Stop deportations!

The President. Thank you. All right.

Audience members. Stop deportations! Stop deportations!

The President. What I'd like to do—no, no, don't worry about it, guys. Okay, let me finish.

Audience members. Stop deportations! Yes, we can! Stop deportations!

The President. How about—these guys don't need to go.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Let me finish. No, no, no, let—he can stay there. Let me—[*applause*]. Hold on a second. Hold on a second.

So I respect the passion of these young people because they feel deeply about the concerns for their families. Now, what you need to know, when I'm speaking as President of the

United States and I come to this community, is that if, in fact, I could solve all these problems without passing laws in Congress, then I would do so.

But we're also a nation of laws. That's part of our tradition. And so the easy way out is to try to yell and pretend like I can do something by violating our laws. And what I'm proposing is the harder path, which is to use our democratic processes to achieve the same goal that you want to achieve. But it won't be as easy as just shouting. It requires us lobbying and getting it done.

So the—[*applause*]. So for those of you who are committed to getting this done, I am going to march with you and fight with you every step of the way to make sure that we are welcoming every striving, hard-working immigrant who sees America the same way we do: as a country where no matter who you are or where you—what you look like or where you come from, you can make it if you try.

And if you're serious about making that happen, then I'm ready to work with you. But it is going to require work. It is not simply a matter of us just saying we're going to violate the law. That's not our tradition. But the great thing about this country is we have this wonderful process of democracy, and sometimes, it is messy, and sometimes, it is hard, but ultimately, justice and truth win out. That's always been the case in this country; that's going to continue to be the case today.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Miles Scott, a 5-year-old cancer patient who, with the help of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, was given an opportunity to be the superhero "Batkid" for a day in San Francisco, CA; Geetha Vallabhaneni, chief executive officer, Luminix Inc.; former Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; Eliseo V. Medina, executive vice president, Service Employees International Union; Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California; former President George W. Bush; and Andrew Ly, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, his brothers Binh, Sam, and Paul Ly, vice presidents, and his brother Tom Ly, vice chairman, Sugar Bowl Bakery.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco
November 25, 2013

The President. Hello, San Francisco! Well, hello, hello, hello! Thank you. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Have a seat. It is good to be back in San Francisco! Love this place.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. [*Applause*] I love you back.

I always have fun in San Francisco. There's always something going on. Just even in the rope line—[*laughter*]—I had some folks sing to me, had a guy who took a photo with me with the shoes with the little toes in them. [*Laughter*] I am sure that's the first time that's ever happened to a President. And they looked very comfortable. But that doesn't happen in Chicago. [*Laughter*] There have been at least five protests that I don't know what they're protesting, but they're yelling something. [*Laughter*] That's sort of par for the course in San Francisco. [*Laughter*] I knew it was something.

Part of the reason, though, that I love coming here is because I've got such great friends. And I just want to acknowledge them, although I'm sure they've already been acknowledged. First of all, your outstanding mayor, Ed Lee, is here. Give Mayor Lee a big round of applause. You've got your wonderful AG, your attorney general; Kamala Harris is here. Outstanding Members of Congress: Mike Honda is here; Eric Swalwell is here; Barbara Lee is here. [*Applause*] Barbara Lee!

I want to thank our cohosts Nicola Miner and Robert Mailer Anderson. Give them a big round of applause. And their fabulous children who are here and, I think, didn't go to school today. But that's okay. [*Laughter*]

The new person who is leading the University of California system—and we miss her in Washington, but she's going to do a great job here—Janet Napolitano is here.

And one thing I did not like about today is that I did not have a chance to hear some friends of mine play—who, I've had them at the White House and I try never to miss a performance when I get a chance because they are just fabulous—give it up for Herbie Hancock, Alicia Moran, Jason Moran, Joshua Redman, Esperanza Spalding.

And all of you are here, and I'm grateful for that. I know you came basically for the music, so I'm not going to speak long. [*Laughter*] But I so appreciate you being here in support of the Democratic Party and the Democrat National Committee, because we've got a lot of work to do.

Sometimes, people ask me, how do you keep up with everything involved in this job of yours, which is kind of a crazy job? There's a lot of stuff. [*Laughter*] And it's all pretty complicated, and nobody is ever entirely happy with any decision that you make, and your hair is a lot grayer than it used to be. [*Laughter*] And what I tell them is that every morning, I try to think back to how I got involved in public service in the first place, and I think back to my own family's story. I think about my grandparents and my grandfather fighting in World War II in Patton's army and coming back and benefiting from the GI bill.

And I think about my grandmother, who, partly because of how women were treated when she was growing up, wasn't able to go to college herself, but worked her way up from being a secretary to being the vice president of a bank and then hit the glass ceiling and probably could have gone a little further if it hadn't been for some of the bias that existed at the time.

I think about my mom, single mom raising two kids, and the help that scholarships provided her so that she could end up getting her education and then work around the world, helping folks in need.

I think about Michelle and her family. Michelle's dad, a blue-collar worker all his life, never went to college. Michelle's mom worked as a secretary for most of her life when she wasn't looking after the kids.

And then I look at my daughters, and I think about that progression, that trajectory, and what this country has done for my family. And then I travel around the country, and I see that same story repeated over and over again: of people who came here from different places without a lot except hopes and dreams and this belief in an America where, if you worked hard, you could make it; that if you tried hard, regardless of what you looked like, where you came from, what your last name was, who you loved, that you had a chance to succeed. You could pursue your own portion of the American Dream.

And why I feel so privileged in this job is because in some small measure, every single day, I have an opportunity to advance that story and to make sure that it's there for not just Malia and Sasha, but for the next generation: for your kids, your grandkids, and the kids and grandkids of folks who can't afford a fundraiser like this.

And we've made enormous progress over the last 5 years on a whole variety of issues: most fundamentally, making sure that we didn't slip into a great depression; making sure that we were able to expand financial assistance to young people who wanted to go to college; making sure that, yes, in this country, if you get sick, you won't go bankrupt, because you have the possibility of getting affordable health care; making sure that we ended two—ended one war, we'll end another war next year; that we realigned our security with our values and our ideals.

We've made sure that we ended "don't ask, don't tell," and we made sure that we stood on the right side of history when it came to making everybody subject to the same rights and responsibilities as American citizens. And saving an auto industry. You go down the list, and it's been pretty productive. [*Laughter*]

But I tell you—so that's what I think about when I get up in the morning. [*Laughter*] This is all while I'm just brushing my teeth. It—[*laughter*]. But what I think about at the end of

the day is how much more has to be done. What I think about at the end of the day is the story that I hear in a letter or from somebody in a rope line, who lost their job and, no matter how hard they try, haven't been able to get one again and are worried now about losing their home.

Or I think about somebody who is fortunate enough to have a job, but hasn't seen a raise in 5 years and are trying to figure out whether they're going to be able to retire. Or I think about the young person who says, "I started school, but I had to drop out because I just couldn't sustain the debt." Or I think about the young person who comes up to me and says: "Mr. President, thank you for deferred action. I was brought here when I was 5 years old, and I consider myself as American as anybody else, but I don't have papers, and you helped me, but I'm worried about my mom and my dad and what might happen to them if we don't get immigration passed."

I think about the military families that I meet and the young men and women that I meet at Walter Reed who have sacrificed so much—in some cases, unimaginable sacrifice—for our security and our liberty. And I think about the work that we still have to do to make sure that our veterans are treated with the honor and the respect and the support that they have earned.

And I think about all these young kids running around, 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds, and how much promise they've got and potential and energy. And if we could just make sure that they're getting high-quality early childhood education when they're young, it doesn't matter how poor they may be right now, there's nothing they can't achieve. But I also think about the fact that we're nowhere close to providing the kind of support that is required to make sure every child in America actually has opportunity.

I think about the amazing young scientists and researchers who are coming up with cures for Alzheimer's or cancer or HIV, but who tell me, you know what, we're running out of research money, and it seems like each year, fewer and fewer research grants are available, and we're not sure how much longer we can keep going despite all these promising avenues that we have.

And I think about the small-businesspeople who are doing great work, but still feel as if the Tax Code is tilted in favor of folks who can hire big-shot attorneys and big-shot accountants, and somehow, they don't feel like they're getting a fair shake. And they can't hire lobbyists to set up a bunch of loopholes for them.

And I think about the incredible beauty of a State like California, and I wonder whether or not we're moving fast enough to deal with climate change so that that same beauty will be available for our kids and our grandkids and the generations to come.

And so my day starts off with great promise. [*Laughter*] And my day ends, and I look at my checklist of stuff I've got to do, and I'm thinking, man, we've still got a long way to go. And 3 years will go like that. It will go like that. And those of us who have kids know how fast it goes, because Malia and Sasha, they're like weeds. [*Laughter*]

So the question then becomes, understanding that we're never going to be able to get everything done that needs to get done right now, right away; that we live in a democracy in a big, complex country and there's a lot of disagreement and there's a lot of ideas being contested and regional differences and cultural differences that we experience; understanding that it's not all going to happen overnight—the question becomes what during this moment, this week, this month, this year, next year, the next 3 years, what can we do to continue to advance this core idea that here in this country, it doesn't matter what you look like, where you come from, who you love, what your last name is, if you work hard, you can make it, and by you making it individually, somehow, all of us are a little bit better off. How do we vindicate that idea? How do we keep on pressing it forward?

Now, what's hampering us right now is not that we don't have good policy ideas. We know what works. We know right now that if we had a budget that invested in rebuilding our infrastructure—our roads, our bridges, our ports,

smart grids, broadband lines—we know that we'd create jobs right now and improve the economy right now and grow it faster right now. And we'd be laying the groundwork for growth for decades to come. We know that. We know it's true. We've done it before. It's part of how America became an economic superpower.

We know that if we invest in basic research, incredible companies like those in this region are going to be created faster. We're going to be creating products and services that none of us even imagined. We know that. We know if we invest in early childhood education—bigger bang for the buck than just about anything we could do—every dollar we invest, we'd save seven bucks on the other end, because young people would have done better, less likely to get into trouble, less likely to go to prison, less likely to be dependent on the State. We know it.

These things shouldn't be controversial. We know we can actually pay for it while bringing down our deficit. The deficit has been cut in more than half since I came into office. And—[*applause*]—coming down faster than any time since World War II.

So we know that we can bring down our deficits. But we could still invest in the things I just talked about: closing a few tax loopholes, making some modest reforms to make sure that our social safety net is there for the long term. And by the way, the things I'm talking about, they're not even particularly ideological. You know? They're just common sense.

So what's stopping us from doing it?

Audience member. Executive order.

The President. Well, it's politics. What we know is the fact that right now in this country, there's at least one faction of one party that has decided they're more interested in stopping progress than advancing it and aren't interested in compromise or engaging in solving problems; they're more interested in scoring points for the next election.

Now, look, I'm in public office. I know a lot of politicians, and—[*laughter*]—it's not as if Democrats have no blemishes. Everybody who is in public office is mindful of polls and mindful of how things play. That's the nature of the job. And some of it's legitimate: You're trying to pay attention to what the people who sent you there are saying. You want to try to pay attention to their concerns.

But part of public service is also leadership. It's also saying there are certain things that are right. There are certain things that have to be done even when they're hard. There are certain things where we actively seek to govern and to work with the other side, even if we don't agree with them on a hundred percent of things. There's 60 percent or 70 percent or 80 percent of the things that we do agree on; let's go ahead and get those done. And then we can argue about the other stuff.

Audience member. Executive order.

The President. And that—[*applause*]. And somebody keeps on yelling, "Executive order." [*Laughter*] Is this the—well, it turns out—[*laughter*]. The reason—I'm going to actually pause on this issue because a lot of people have been saying this lately on every problem—[*laughter*]—which is, just sign an Executive order, and we can pretty much do anything and basically nullify Congress. And unfortunately——

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Well, wait, wait, wait, before everybody starts clapping—[*laughter*]. That's not how it works. We've got this Constitution. We've got this whole thing about separation of powers and branches. And so we've got to—there is no shortcut to politics. And there's no shortcut to democracy. And there's—we have to win on the merits of the argument with the American people. As laborious as it seems sometimes, as much misinformation as there is out there sometimes, as frustrating as it may be sometimes, what we have to do is just keep on going, keep on pushing. And eventually, we move in a better direction.

That's been true for the first 5 years of my administration. When folks said we couldn't end "don't ask, don't tell"—in fact, somebody—a bunch of people yelled, "Executive order." [*Laughter*] I decided, well, let's try to actually pass a law. And we did.

It's been true obviously with health care. Folks have fought us every step of the way, but we have kept on going. And this website is going to get fixed. And we are going to be signing people up, and we're going to make sure that everybody in California and everybody in America who needs health care is going to get it. We just kept on going. We don't stop. [*Applause*] We don't stop. We don't stop.

It's true domestically, and it's true on foreign policy. The Middle East is enormously challenging. We got a deal signed this weekend on Iran and for the first time halting the advancement of their nuclear program. But there's still enormous challenges ahead. We haven't solved this problem. We haven't solved the mistrust and the enmity and the fundamental challenges of Iran's nuclear capacity. But we're testing diplomacy. We're not resorting immediately to military conflict. And we create a space where there's a possibility of resolving problems that have lingered for decades.

It's not easy. I can't just sign an Executive order. [*Laughter*] But it's possible, and it's worth the effort.

And so let me just close by saying this. The—what's true today, what's been true over the last 5 years has been true throughout our history: It was because we kept going that emancipation happened. It was because we kept on going that women won the right to vote. It's because we kept on going, despite every trial and tribulation, that workers got their rights. It's because we kept on going that the environment was cleaned up.

It's because people were marching and organizing and pushing and prodding and suffering defeats and not being defeated by those defeats and just kept on going that, slowly but surely, America has become a more fair place; a more just place; our environment is cleaner; a less violent place; a land of opportunity; a place where, despite everything that's happened, we continue to be a beacon for people all around the world.

So that's what gives me comfort before I go to bed. [*Laughter*] After I've got all those worries in my head about all the stuff that remains undone, at the end of the day when I rest my head on that pillow, I think, this country, we found a way. We've always found a way. Because we don't stop. We persevere, we keep on going, and we keep in mind that north star, that focus, that direction, that we care so deeply about. Because that's what the American story is all about.

And for all our flaws, that's what the Democratic Party is all about. And that's what you're fighting for alongside us. That's what your contributions are about. That's what our Members of Congress are fighting for. That's what the DNC is about.

And that's why we need you. We need you so we can keep on going, because we've got a lot of work to do and I want to do it with you. And I'm not going to get all of it done in the next 3 years, but I'm going to get an awful lot of it done in the next 3 years because of folks like you.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. at the San Francisco Jazz Center. In his remarks, he referred to Callum, Dashiell, Lucinda, and Frances Anderson, children of event cohosts Nicola Miner and Robert Mailer Anderson; and former Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, mother-in-law Marian Robinson, and brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Beverly Hills, California

November 25, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, I am just thrilled to be back in California, thrilled to be back in L.A., and thrilled to be with my great friend, Magic Johnson, and Cookie. We thank them so much for their hospitality. This is just an extraordinary place. But more importantly, they've just got an extraordinary spirit, and to accommodate us for this cause means a lot to us.

There are a couple other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, Andre and Lisa and Elisa, thank you so much for letting us crash here also. [*Laughter*]

We've got some wonderful Members of Congress who are here today, and I just want you all to give them a big round of applause. Janice Hahn is here. Mark Takano is here. Scott Peters is here. Linda Sanchez is here. And Alan Lowenthal is here. And they all do a great job on behalf of the people of California.

Audience member. I love you.

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*]

Now, a couple of things I just want to say before I start talking issues and politics. On the ride over, I've got a wonderful writer, David Remnick, who's following me around right now. And he actually started as a sports reporter before he became the editor of the New Yorker. So not surprisingly, even though he was supposed to be asking me about Iran, as we were driving over here, he starts saying, "So what about Magic?" [*Laughter*] And "What does this mean to you?" And I said, first of all, understand, I was a 76ers fan. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. No!

The President. No, look, I'm not one of these people—hold on. I do not go to different cities and tell them, man, I love the Lakers, I love the Celtics. [*Laughter*] I'm not one of those people who just says what you want to hear. I was a 76ers fan because Dr. J, when I was 12, 13, 14 years old, that was my guy. And so when he went to the 76ers, I became a fan of his. Now, I became a fan of Magic's when he was in college at Michigan State, but I couldn't just suddenly shift and be a fair-weather friend to the Doctor. [*Laughter*]

So when Magic, in game 6, scores 42, playing center because Kareem was hurt——

Former National Basketball Association Player Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Jr. ——rebounds.

The President. I remember the stats. You don't need to remind me of that. [*Laughter*] And if I didn't, then down in Magic's trophy room, I promise, it's all printed out. [*Laughter*]

So you watch this career unfold, and it's a magical career. And the championships and "Showtime," and for anybody who loves basketball as much as me, there's nobody who is a bigger icon than Magic Johnson. But this is all by way of saying, when David asked me, "What does this mean, being with Magic?" what I said is, as much as I admired his basketball career, what I think about Magic, what I actually think about are two things. One is, when the incredibly difficult circumstances of his HIV diagnosis comes up, the way he handles that doesn't just empower folks who are dealing with that illness, doesn't just help put research dollars in there, doesn't just educate the public, it moves the country and the world to think in an entirely new way that ends up changing the face of this country and our attitudes with the kind of grace and courage that only true leaders can display. That's number one.

And number two, Magic has become our prime example of somebody who was blessed with incredible fame and fortune from a sports career and understood his next step is to build institutions and businesses and employ people, and go into communities that folks said weren't worth anything and suddenly find that they're worth a whole lot if somebody is willing to invest in them.

And so it's for those two reasons that I'm proud to call Magic Johnson a friend. Also keep in mind, the last time Magic played basketball was with me at my 49th birthday par-

ty—[*laughter*]—and I just want to tell you, it wasn't pretty. [*Laughter*] But we all love him, and obviously, this city loves him. And now the Dodgers love him. [*Laughter*] And he just continues to be the Prince of the City.

Now, the reason we're here tonight, though, is because this country has gone through some very difficult times over the last 5 years, as tough a stretch as we've seen in my lifetime: a great recession that almost tipped into depression, a financial crisis that led to people losing homes and jobs and made them less certain about the future. We've gone through two wars; terrorist attacks. We've got concerns about climate change. We have worries about whether or not our politics and our country can work in a way that is up to all these challenges.

But I'm here to tell you I'm optimistic about the future. And the reason I'm optimistic is, when you look at American history, some way, somehow, we always are able to confront our challenges. Sometimes not right away, sometimes we take a couple steps back before we move forward, but eventually, we come together to reaffirm the ideals that helped build this country in the first place. The idea that in this country, it doesn't matter what you look like, where you come from, what your last name is, who you love. If you're willing to work hard, if you embrace the values that are at the heart of the American experience, then you can succeed. You can make it if you try in this country.

And all of us are invested in making sure that everybody gets a fair shot. And whether it's been the struggle for civil rights or women's rights or workers' rights, whether it's been us moving west and moving from an agricultural society to an industrial society, now an information society, we embrace change, and we don't shy away from it. And we just keep on going until eventually we find ourselves on the other side more prosperous, more peaceful, more diverse, more fair, more just than we were before.

And I have no doubt that that's going to be true for this generation and for the next generation because that's in our DNA. That's who we are. But that success, that achievement, what makes us exceptional, doesn't happen on its own. It happens because, collectively, we come together and we're willing to work for it.

And more than anything, that's what's needed right now: that sense that we're in this together and that each of us can achieve incredible individual success, but we have some obligations to each other. And most of the arguments that are taking place in Washington right now have to do with whether or not we are going to continue to vindicate those values and those ideals that built this country.

When I talk about providing early childhood education to every child in America, that's not just an education issue. That is an economic issue, and it is a moral issue. Are we willing to invest to make sure every child, whether that kid's name is Earvin or that kid's name is Barack or José—it doesn't matter—will that child, if they're willing to work hard, be able to succeed?

When I talk about rebuilding our infrastructure in this country—our roads, our bridges, our ports, our broadband lines, our smart grid—it's not just a issue of what's good for our economy and the fact that it would put people back to work right now and lay the foundation for future economic growth. It's also a recognition that this generation has to invest so that future generations can succeed.

I just came from San Francisco, and you fly over the Golden Gate Bridge. That didn't just happen. There was a generation that said, we can imagine doing great things together not just for ourselves, but for future generations. When I talk about the Affordable Care Act, all the fighting that we've been having to do, it's not just a matter of dollars and cents and why it's good for the economy to make sure that people aren't going to emergency rooms—because that's the most expensive care—and why the only way we're going to lower health care costs over the long term is if we start delivering health care smarter. It's also a values question. Do we want to live in a country as wealthy as we are, where if somebody gets sick, they lose their home, they go bankrupt? They have to weigh, can I go right now to the emergency room, knowing that that may mean I can't pay for my child's school tuition?

That's not the country I want to live in. And that's not the country that you want to live in, which means that we've got to fight for it. And when we end "don't ask, don't tell," it's not just because we won't have an effective military unless we field the very best people regardless of sexual orientation. It's also a larger question of whether or not in this country you can serve the country you love regardless of who you love. It's a values question.

So most of the debates that we're having right now on budgets, on whether we're investing in research and science, whether we are going to pass immigration reform so that we continue to be a land that welcomes strivers from all around the world and continually replenishing the vibrancy of this country, whether we're talking about making sure that our civil rights laws are enforced and making sure that we're protecting our planet from the potential ravages of climate change—these aren't just technical questions, they're values questions. It has to do with what do we stand for, who are we as a people, and what are we going to leave for the next generation.

Because it turns out that, look, there are some very hard, tough policy questions, but most of the time, we've got good answers. We know what works. And what's stopping us is a failure of our politics and a lack of ambition. And we shy away from what might be hard. And our politics all too often encourages people to think selfishly or short-term. And that's what the debate in Washington is about, and that's what the debate in this country generally is about right now.

Now, what makes me optimistic is every time we come to these crossroads where we've got to move forward, we eventually do. Sometimes, we try everything else until we do, but we eventually do. And I have no doubt that we're going to do so this time as well. I'm confident we're going to get immigration reform passed sooner or later, because it's the right thing to do. And I expect it to be soon.

I am confident that we are going to continue to improve our education system and make sure that every young person in America can succeed in this 21st-century economy. I am confident that all of us who have kids or nieces or nephews, that we're going to say to ourselves that we don't want a planet that is destroyed because we haven't been willing to increase fuel efficiency standards or double down on clean energy or invest in the research necessary to keep carbon out of the atmosphere. I'm absolutely sure we're going to make sure this country provides affordable health care for every single American. And if I have to fight for another 3 years to make sure that happens, I will do so.

And we're going to make sure that we've got an economy that doesn't just benefit the few at the top, but an economy that provides growth and broad-based prosperity. Magic has become a great businessman, and some of his partners are here, but one thing they all understand is that if your customers are doing well, then you'll do well. If workers are getting paid a decent wage with decent benefits and have some sense of security, then that money comes back to business.

And there are certain things we can do to promote a growth agenda generally, because it really is true that a rising tide can lift a lot of boats; it makes it a lot easier to lift all those boats. But it's also true that we've got to make sure we've got an economy in which everybody from the boardroom down to the factory floor—the folks in the corner office, but also the folks cleaning the corner office—that they have a chance to make it.

And that's what we're fighting for. So ultimately, the only way this happens, though, is with the support and faith and effort of all of you. Every politician uses sports analogies, even if they didn't play sports. My basketball career ended in high school. [*Laughter*] I probably could have finagled my way onto a Division III team, but that was about as far as I could have gone. But when I watch Malia and Sasha play sports—and I've encouraged them and occasionally coached them—one of the things I tell them is, even if you're not talented like Magic Johnson, what sports will teach you is the concept of team, the idea of a group of individuals molding themselves into a unit to

achieve a goal, to pursue something that is important and that individually we can't achieve.

And part of what made Magic Johnson one of the greatest of all time—there were folks who scored more than he did, and there were folks who were faster than he was, but nobody played a team game better than he did. And that's, more than anything, what we need right now in this country, is a sense that we are in this together and we are pursuing this thing, this objective: an America that is more prosperous and more peaceful and is growing together. That's what we're fighting for. And that's not a Democratic thing or a Republican thing, that's an American thing.

But I am very proud of the fact that those values are at the heart of the Democratic Party and all the Democrats who are here as Congress—as Members of Congress. And so when you support them, you are part of the team.

We're going to need you, because this is going to be a big fight. And it's not one that's going to be finished; there's no shot clock on this. You've just got to keep on going. [*Laughter*] And it requires endurance, and it requires persistence. But at the end of the day, I'm confident we're going to be victorious. And the reason I'm confident is because of all of you.

So thank you for your support tonight. Don't let up. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:47 p.m. at the residence of Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Jr., and Earlitha "Cookie" Johnson. In his remarks, he referred to Elisa Johnson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson; Andre and Lisa Johnson, son and daughter-in-law of Mr. Johnson; and former National Basketball Association players Julius W. "Dr. J" Erving II and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 26. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Beverly Hills
November 25, 2013

Thank you. All right, everybody. Have a seat. That's enough, that's enough. [*Laughter*]

Now, let me clarify something. First of all, there was valet parking—[*laughter*]—for Cheryl. We thought it was appropriate for Haim to get some exercise. [*Laughter*] Cheryl, being the wonderful person that she is, declined the valet parking, and so she might have joined him. But I would have been happy to have her drive right up into the South Lawn. [*Laughter*]

We are so grateful for Haim and Cheryl, not just for this event, but for the extraordinary friendship and their persistent advocacy on behalf of so many issues that we all care about. And not only to Cheryl and Haim, but Tifany and Heidi and Ness and Tanya, and Cheryl's parents and her aunt who are here, we want to say thank you for your generosity and thank you for your friendship. We are thankful.

Now, I understand Harry Reid was here, but Harry left. But I'll tell you what, although Harry may not win sort of any contest for best sound bite on CNN—[*laughter*]—if you're in a fight, you want Harry Reid in your corner. And nobody has fought harder for the American people and for working families in this country than Harry, with the possible exception of the person who has been one of the finest Speakers that we've ever had and who I intend to see Speaker once again, Nancy Pelosi.

Harry and Nancy could not do the great work that they were doing unless they had an incredible team around them. Two of the people who have, let's face it, fairly thankless jobs, but also happen to be some of the finest public servants that we have in the country: Michael Bennet, the head of the DSCC; Steve Israel leading the charge at the DCCC. We want to thank them for the great work that they are doing.

And one of my favorite people who has just been an incredible source of laughter and

support for many years, including when I was in the Senate, your own Senator Barbara Boxer is here. Three outstanding Members of Congress—four, five—five outstanding Members of Congress here. Karen Bass is here—where is Karen? Judy Chu is here. Anna Eshoo is here. Brad Sherman is here. And Adam Schiff is here. And of course, you are all here. So I want to thank you for your support.

Now, I have been working on behalf of Steve Israel and Michael Bennet for quite some time now—[*laughter*]—including today. So rather than give a stock speech, what I want to do is spend most of our time in a conversation. And this is a small enough group that I'll have a chance to answer some questions and take some comments. But let me just say two things, one about domestic policy, one about foreign policy.

Over the last 5 years, thanks to the leadership of Nancy and Harry and legislators who are here, we have accomplished as much, if not more, than any time in our history: saving an economy from a Great Depression; revitalizing an auto industry that is producing better cars and has come roaring back like nobody believed; doubling our exports; drastically reducing our dependence on foreign oil; doubling fuel efficiency standards; doubling our production of clean energy; reducing the pace of our carbon emissions; ending the war in Iraq; about to end the war in Afghanistan; recentering our fight against terrorism in a way that respects our values and our ideals; expanding access to college for children all across this country; ending "don't ask, don't tell," making sure that we are vindicating the notion that everybody should have a fair shot regardless of their sexual orientation, as well as their race and their gender; pushing for equal pay for women; reinstituting research for stem cells. Across the board, we've made changes that will be lasting, some of which aren't noticed, don't get a lot of headlines, but make a meaningful difference in people's lives every single day.

But I will tell you, of all those things, I am as proud as I've ever been by the work we did to make sure that in this country, if you get sick you don't go bankrupt and that you can get the health care that you need. And I think it's fair to say I'm not happy about the fact that we didn't have a website that worked on the day it was supposed to work. Although, it's actually starting to work pretty well now, and it's going to be working even better in the coming weeks. Here in California, though, you're seeing, despite all the glitches, thousands of people every day who are signing up, getting health care, in some cases for the very first time.

And the difference it makes in their lives is immeasurable. And the reason I wanted to make that point is that so much of what we do is measured through the prism of politics, and on any given day, the notion is that who is up and who is down and what's on cable television should drive and determine our sense of direction and sometimes even our sense of what's right and what's wrong. But when you meet a family who tells you that their kid is alive today because they got an early diagnosis because they could finally go to a doctor where they couldn't before, I don't need a poll to tell me that's the right thing to do. I don't need a headline to tell me that that vindicates a core value that I believe in and that we, as Americans, should believe in. That's a fight worth fighting. I'm proud that we fought it, and we're going to keep on fighting it.

And on foreign policy, obviously, the headlines of late have been about Iran. And let me say that when I came into office, there was a lot of bluster about Iran, but what was needed was a plan, because the fact of the matter is that Iran was moving rapidly in building its nuclear capacity. And so, with the help of Members of Congress, including the Members who are here today, we constructed the toughest set of sanctions ever. And we organized laboriously over the course of 2 years around the world cooperation not just from allies, but also in some cases from folks who were very reluctant to apply sanctions, Russia and China. And we mobilized international unity around saying Iran had to meet its international responsibilities.

And as a consequence of the strength of those sanctions and the painstaking diplomacy that we engaged in, Iran ultimately came to the table and said, we are prepared in a serious

way to negotiate around our nuclear program—for the first time in over a decade.

And as a consequence of the agreement that John Kerry, who is doing a great job as Secretary of State, was able to construct, we've seen the first halt in the Iranian nuclear program in a decade; the reduction to zero of the 20-percent enriched uranium that was the biggest threat to immediate breakout capacity; unprecedented inspections—in some cases, daily inspections—into what they're doing throughout the country with their nuclear program; and the prospect that we may be able through peaceful, diplomatic means remove this cloud that has hovered over the Middle East and had the potential, and continues to have the potential, of triggering a nuclear arms race in the most volatile region of the world.

Now, that's the right thing to do. That's good for the United States. It's good for our allies. It's good for Israel. Because I've said, and I will repeat, that I don't take any options off the table as Commander in Chief when it comes to the security of the United States or our allies. And I've also said we cannot accept Iran having a nuclear weapon. But I spend too much time at Walter Reed looking at kids, 22, 23, 24, 25 years old, who've paid the kind of price that very few of us in this room can imagine on behalf of our freedom, not to say I'm going to do every single thing that I can to try to resolve these issues without resorting to military conflict.

And that's what you should expect from me as President of the United States. That's what the times demand. This is not politics; these are not games. And the stakes are extraordinarily high. And we make decisions like the one we made—we don't make them based on political expedience; we don't make them on the basis of what might make a good headline today or tomorrow. But we make them on the basis of our judgment—my judgment—about what we need to do to keep America safe. It is the single most solemn responsibility I have as President of the United States.

I make those two points simply to say this. We are at an event here because we understand that part of our democracy—part of this amazing experiment we're engaged in—is, we've got to run around and we've got to raise money and we've got to make speeches and we've got to go to rallies and we've got to get folks fired up and we've got to engage in the process. And that's a good thing. That's a healthy thing. That's what our democracy is about. But I also want everybody to remember the stakes involved in these things: that family and that kid who's sick, the people who we need to protect, the troops and their families back home.

Ultimately, this translates into real-life consequences. And I say that so that all of you recognize you are involved in a very important enterprise, one that is passed on from generation to generation, where we have an obligation to do the same thing that our parents and our grandparents and our great-grandparents did, which is to chip away at what sometimes seem like intractable problems, but because of that persistence and that effort and that seriousness of purpose and a willingness to stay true to our values, no matter how tough the problem is, we usually come out better on the other side. And I expect no less of this generation.

But sometimes it's bumpy, and sometimes it's hard, and sometimes there are setbacks. And that's okay because it's worth it. And I hope that's why you're here today, because I know that I can't do it without all of you.

All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 p.m. at the residence of Haim and Cheryl L. Saban. In his remarks, he referred to Tifany Lenhart and Heidi N. Lenhart, daughters of Mrs. Saban; and Ness Saban, son, and Tanya Saban, daughter, of Mr. and Mrs. Saban. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 26. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Headquarters of DreamWorks Animation SKG, Inc., in Glendale, California
November 26, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Oh, it is good to be in L.A.! It is colder in DC at the moment, colder in Chicago, and 70-degree weather is something to be thankful for.

And it is great to be at DreamWorks Animation. I would like to work here. [*Laughter*] I have asked Jeffrey. The only concern I had was, the lights were kind of dim in the offices, and—[*laughter*]—I'm pretty sure I'd fall asleep. But there's a natural connection between me and DreamWorks. I don't know if you know this, but my ears were one of the inspirations for "Shrek." [*Laughter*] That's true. True story.

Mellody was being very modest when she said she had a front-row seat. Mellody was one of my earliest supporters back when nobody could pronounce my name. And her and John Rogers at Ariel Capital helped to cochair some of my first fundraisers. And they'd have to drag some straggly group in, kicking and screaming, and write a check and listen to this young Senator who had a lot of ideas, but not necessarily any realistic prospects to win. And she went through a lot of ups and downs with me and my career and is just a great, great friend. So I want to thank her publicly for all the support that she's given us.

We've got some folks here who are fighting for the people of South—Southern California every single day, and I just want to acknowledge them. We've got the mayor of Glendale, Dave Weaver. We've got three of your outstanding Members of Congress: Brad Sherman, Adam Schiff, Karen Bass. They are all doing a great job.

I want to thank all of you for being here. And I want to thank your CEO, Jeffrey Katzenberg, for inviting me. Jeffrey, like Mellody, has been a friend and a supporter through thick and thin. And I think his place in the entertainment industry is legendary; I don't need to puff him up too much. [*Laughter*] He has a healthy sense of self. [*Laughter*] But he is a great friend and somebody whose counsel and advice I value. And I'm incredibly grateful to be here at this wonderful institution that he helped to build.

And I've come here today because this is one of America's economic engines. Not just DreamWorks, but this whole cluster of companies that generations have grown up knowing: Disney and Warner and Universal and others. When you think about it, what finance is to New York, what the auto industry is to the Midwest, what technology is to Northern California, entertainment is to this part of the country.

And most of us have spent a lot of time thinking about our favorite movies or TV shows, but we don't often think about the entire infrastructure and industry behind the scenes. Hundreds of thousands of middle class jobs—they're not always on the marquee—jobs for electricians and carpenters and sound mixers and makeup artists and designers and animators depend on this incredible industry here in Southern California.

Entertainment is one of America's biggest exports. And every day, you sell a product that's made in America to the rest of the world. Every time somebody buys movie tickets or DVDs or distribution rights to a film, some of that money goes back to the local economy right here.

And believe it or not, entertainment is part of our American diplomacy. It's part of what makes us exceptional, part of what makes us such a world power. You can go anywhere on the planet, and you'll see a kid wearing a "Madagascar" T-shirt. [*Laughter*] You can say, "May the Force be with you"—they know what you're talking about. [*Laughter*]

Hundreds of millions of people may never set foot in the United States, but thanks to you, they've experienced a small part of what makes our country special. They've learned something about our values. We have shaped a world culture through you.

And the stories that we tell transmit values and ideals about tolerance and diversity and overcoming adversity and creativity that are part of our DNA. And as a consequence of what you've done, you helped shape the world culture in a way that has made the world better.

They might not know the Gettysburg Address, but if they're watching some old movie, maybe "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" or "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" or "Will or Grace"—"Will and Grace" and "Modern Family," they've had a front-row seat to our march towards progress, even if their own nations haven't made that progress yet. And young people in countries all around the world suddenly make a connection and have an affinity to people who don't look like them and maybe originally they might have been fearful of, and now suddenly, they say, "Oh, this person is like me," which is one of the powers of art, but that's what you transmit.

And that is a remarkable legacy. Now, it's also a big responsibility. When it comes to issues like gun violence, we've got to make sure that we're not glorifying it, because the stories you tell shape our children's outlook and their lives. Earlier this year, leaders from this town sat down with Vice President Biden to talk about what Hollywood could do to help keep our kids safe. This was in the wake of Sandy Hook. And those conversations need to continue. The stories we tell matter. And you tell stories more powerfully than anybody else on the Earth.

But I want to make clear, even as we think long and hard about the messages we send, we should never waver from our commitment to the freedom that allows us to tell those stories so well. Protecting our First Amendment rights are vital to who we are. And it's also good business, because in the global race for jobs and industries, the thing we do better than anybody else is creativity. That's something that can't be copied. It's one of the reasons why even with new markets and new technologies, there's still no better place to make movies and television and music than right here in the United States.

Entertainment is one of the bright spots of our economy. The gap between what we can do and what other countries can do is enormous.

Audience member. Woo!

The President. Yes, that's worth cheering for. [*Applause*] Yes. And that means that we've got to do what it takes to make sure that this industry, and every great American industry, keeps that competitive edge so that more folks can find career paths like many of you have, and get good middle class jobs that allow you to support a family and get ahead.

Nothing is more important than that right now. And as Mellody mentioned, when I came into office, we were going through a severe crisis. Five years later, America has largely fought our way back. We've made the tough choices required not just to help the economy recover, but to rebuild it on a new foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth.

We refocused on manufacturing and exports, and today, our businesses sell more goods and services made in this country to the rest of the world than ever before. Our manufacturers are adding jobs for the first time since the 1990s, led by an American auto industry that's come roaring back. American cars are really good now. [*Laughter*]

We decided to reverse our dependence on foreign oil. So today, we generate more renewable energy than ever—doubled our renewable energy—more natural gas than anybody. For the first time in nearly 20 years, America now produces more of our own oil than we buy from other countries. [*Applause*] It's good news.

When I took office, America invested far less than countries like China did in wireless infrastructure, and we've now narrowed that gap, and we have helped companies unleash jobs and innovation and become a booming app economy that's created hundreds of thousands of jobs. Six years ago, only 5 percent of the world's smartphones ran on American operating systems. Today, more than 80 percent do.

And yes, we decided to fix a broken health care system. And it's interesting—I was talking

to some of the studio execs here, and I said, look, the rollout of the new health care marketplace was rough and nobody was more frustrated about the problems with our website than I am. And yet, here in Southern California and here across this State, there are thousands of people every single day who are getting health care for the first time—for the first time—because of this. And by the way, the website is continually working better, so check it out. [*Laughter*]

But as a country, we're now poised to gain health coverage for millions of Americans, starting on January 1, and that includes more than 350,000 here in California who have already signed up. And thanks in part to the Affordable Care Act, health care costs are growing at the slowest rate in 50 years. Employer-based health care costs are growing at about one-third the rate of a decade ago. And that means that if the studios here or your employers aren't having to spend as much on health care, that they can hire more folks and reinvest more in the business and come up with those cool technologies that—I don't exactly understand how they work, but—[*laughter*]—were really neat to look at. [*Laughter*]

And by the way, we've done all this while bringing down our deficits. After years of trillion-dollar deficits, we reined in spending. You would think sometimes listening to folks in Washington that we haven't made any progress on that front. We wound down two wars. We changed a Tax Code that was too skewed towards the wealthiest Americans at the expense of the middle class. You add it all up, we've cut our deficits by more than half, and they continue to go down faster than any time since World War II.

So all told, our businesses created 7.8 million new jobs over the past 44 months. America has gone farther, recovered faster than most other industrialized nations. But as Mellody said, we've got more work to do. The stock market is doing great, corporate profits soaring, but too many Americans aren't sharing in that success. And everybody here who works at DreamWorks—a really good place to work. I'm going to ask Jeff if maybe I can work here after—[*applause*]. But all of you have friends and family and neighbors who aren't as lucky. And you know there are still a lot of folks who are struggling out there. And my top priority is making sure that this country remains a country where everybody who is willing to work hard can get ahead.

And we'd be a lot further along without some of the dysfunction and obstruction we've seen in Washington. We would be a lot further along if we could just get folks to act with some sense—[*laughter*]—if we didn't have one wing of one party that was a little less obsessed with repealing health care for 40 million people, more concerned with making sure the law works. If they hadn't spent 40 votes trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act, they might have actually taken some votes on rebuilding our infrastructure or instituting early childhood education for young people across this country or investing more money in basic research that helps to create the amazing technologies that many of you utilize. Any of the serious proposals I've put forward that would be creating jobs right now, they could have been taking votes on that.

Instead of rooting for failure or refighting old battles, Republicans in Congress need to work with us to improve those things about the Affordable Care Act that aren't working as well as they should and implement policies to strengthen the middle class and create jobs.

I—a couple of weeks ago, House Republican leaders handed out a piece of paper to their members, and on the top it said, "Agenda 2014." I'm not making this up. Below that, it was blank. [*Laughter*] No, it was a blank sheet of paper: nothing to create jobs or grow the economy or strengthen the middle class.

And I've put forward my plans to create new jobs and even the odds for the middle class. And I've put forward plans that gives some Republicans some of the things that they want in exchange for ideas that will create good jobs right now. And so far, they won't consider them.

Some people have heard me say my list of top five movies—"The Godfather," I and II, have to be on it. But it turns out, Marlon Brando had it easy, because when it comes to Con-

gress, there's no such thing as an "offer they can't refuse." [*Laughter*] I mean, I just keep on coming back. [*Laughter*] I'm going to keep on trying though. [*Laughter*] I am, because we've got no choice.

The American people agree with us that jobs, growing the economy should be our number-one priority. And we've got to make some investments to make that happen. And we've got to give a better bargain to the middle class and everybody who is working to join the middle class. And that means building on those cornerstones of what makes for a strong middle class: good jobs, a good education, a home of your own, health care when you get sick, a secure retirement even if you're not rich. So we can help manufacturers bring more jobs back to America by investing in American clean energy technology and putting people to work building roads and bridges and schools and high-speed broadband networks that attract businesses from around the world.

We can prepare our children and our workers for the global competition that they'll face: expanding high-quality preschool education, redesigning our high schools, investing in community colleges and job training, and tackling rising college costs so that young people can afford it. We can help responsible homeowners afford a mortgage or refinancing at today's low rates, help build a rock-solid housing system for decades to come, instead of boom and bust.

We can bring the promise of a secure retirement back to reach for middle class families, finding new ways to make it easier for workers to save and strengthening Social Security and getting immigration reform done so that undocumented workers are paying their full share of taxes, but they're not living in the shadows, and we're attracting the best and the brightest from all around the world.

As I was getting a tour of DreamWorks, I didn't ask, but just looking at faces, I could tell, there were some folks who are here not because they were born here, but because they want to be here and they bring extraordinary talents to the United States. And that's part of what makes America special. And that's part of what, by the way, makes California special, because it's always been this magnet of dreamers and strivers and people coming from every direction saying to themselves, you know, if I work hard there, I can have my piece of the American Dream.

We're going to continue to make progress on all those fronts. And yes, we are going to continue to implement the health care law. The product is good. People want it. And we should not live in a country where people are going bankrupt just because they get sick. And anybody who is going to keep on pushing against that, they will meet my resistance, because I am willing to fix any problems that there are, but I'm not going to abandon people to make sure that they've got health insurance in this country. That is not something we're going to do. And the good news is, as I said, thousands of Californians are already signing up.

I read a really powerful story over the weekend—I just want to mention—about uninsured folks in Kentucky who are signing up in droves in one of the poorest counties in the country. Some of them can't imagine what having health insurance would be like. And you read these stories, and you realize how important it is for folks in Kentucky—a State, by the way, that did not vote for me—[*laughter*]—and if Kentucky can do it, than every State should be able to do it.

We should be able to expand Medicaid all across the country. There are millions of people who, right now, even under the law, may not get health care that they deserve because their Governors have refused to do it just for political reasons, expanding Medicaid. Fortunately, California obviously is not one of them. But this is a fight that we're going to keep fighting, because it's worth fighting. And that's what Mellody referred to.

It's true. I'm not an ideological guy, but there are some things I really believe in. And part of what I believe in is that the essence of this country, what makes this place special, is this idea that Hollywood has glorified and held up—but I actually think it's true—that here, more than anyplace else, no matter what you look like, where you come from, what your last name is, who you love, you should be able to

make it if you're willing to work hard. That's what I believe.

And there's certain values that make that a reality. I have my critics, obviously, but since were here in Hollywood, I want to think about something that the late, great Chicago film critic, Robert [Roger]* Ebert said—and I was fortunate to get to know Roger Ebert and was always inspired by how he handled some really tough stuff. "Kindness," he wrote, "covers all of my political beliefs." Kindness covers all of my political beliefs.

And when I think about what I'm fighting for, what gets me up every single day, that captures it as much—just about as much as anything. Kindness, empathy, that sense that I have a stake in your success; that I'm going to make sure, just because Malia and Sasha are doing well, that's not enough, I want your kids to do well also. And I'm willing to help to build good schools so that they get a great education, even if mine are already getting a great education.

And I'm going to invest in infrastructure and building things like the Golden Gate Bridge and the Hoover Dam and the Internet—[*laughter*].

[*At this point, the President winked at the audience.*]

Because I'm investing for the next generation, not just this one. And that's what binds us together, and that's how we've always moved forward, based on the idea that we have a stake in each other's success. And that's what drives me. And that's what will continue to drive me.

I believe that our—every kid should have opportunity. I believe our daughters should have the same opportunities as our sons. I believe that Jeffrey's kids should be able to aspire to whatever they can dream of, but I also want to make sure that the person who's cleaning up Jeffrey's office, that their kid has that same possibility.

And we may have different ideas and different policies on how to do things, but that shouldn't—it shouldn't negate that that core vision is what we're fighting for, and we should be able to sit down together and to keep dreaming and keep working and to make sure that the American Dream that's been described here in Southern California is sustained for generations to come.

And what's stopping us is not policy details; it's not technical issues. It's to summon the courage to put politics aside once in a while and remember that we've got more in common than our politics would suggest. And as long as I've got the privilege of serving as your President, that's what I'm going to keep on making sure that I do: to put politics aside once in a while and work on your behalf.

So thank you, DreamWorks, for what you do. Thank you, Jeffrey, for your hospitality. God bless you. God bless America. Can't wait to see your next movie.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mellody Hobson, chairman of the board of directors, DreamWorks Animation SKG, Inc., who introduced the President; John W. Rogers, Jr., chairman, chief executive officer, and chief investment officer, Ariel Investments, LLC; and David and Laura Katzenberg, children of Jeffrey Katzenberg, chief executive office, cofounder, and director, DreamWorks Animation.

Statement on the Death of Theodore J. Jemison
November 26, 2013

Michelle and I were saddened to hear about the passing of Reverend T.J. Jemison. With visionary spirit and charisma, he led the country's first boycott of segregated seating on public buses 60 years ago, and he went on to help eradicate legal segregation and improve voting rights laws for disenfranchised Americans. As a founding member of the Southern Christian

* White House correction.

Leadership Conference and former president of the National Baptist Convention, he inspired Americans across our country with the courage of his convictions and the depth of his faith.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Justice, we remember the legacy of trailblazers like T.J. Jemison and commit ourselves to carrying that legacy forward in the years to come. Our Nation is a better place because of Reverend Jemison's struggle and sacrifice, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and loved ones.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony
November 27, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody, and happy Thanksgiving.

The office of the Presidency, the most powerful position in the world, brings with it many awesome and solemn responsibilities. This is not one of them. [*Laughter*] But though—the White House turkey pardon is a great tradition. And I know Malia loves it, as does Sasha.

Generally speaking, Thanksgiving is a bad day to be a turkey. Especially at a house with two dogs. So I salute our two guests of honor, Caramel and Popcorn, for their bravery. They came all the way from outside Badger, Minnesota, to be with us. They, like my Chief of Staff, are Vikings fans. I'm not sure that they know that——

[*At this point, the turkeys gobbled.*]

Uh-oh. [*Laughter*] Yes. See? I'm not sure they know that my Bears are heading to Minnesota on Sunday, but in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I'm going to give them a break. [*Laughter*]

We are also excited to have students from Badger High School here. Where they are—where are you guys? [*Applause*] There they are, right there. And finally, let me say thank you to John Burkel, chairman of the National Turkey Federation. Give him a big round of applause.

Now, 80 turkeys on John's farm competed for the chance to make it to the White House and stay off the Thanksgiving table. It was, quite literally, the "Hunger Games." [*Laughter*] And then, after weeks of vocal practice and prepping for the cameras, the two tributes, Caramel and Popcorn, went head to head together for America's vote as top gobbler.

The competition was stiff, but we can officially declare that Popcorn is the winner, proving—[*applause*]. There you go. Proving that even a turkey with a funny name can find a place in politics. [*Laughter*] As for Caramel, he's sticking around, and he's already busy raising money for his next campaign. [*Laughter*] Yes.

On a more serious note, later today Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I will bring a couple less fortunate turkeys to a great organization that works to help out our neighbors here in DC who need it most. And I want to thank Jaindl's Turkey Farm in Orefield, Pennsylvania, for donating those dressed birds for the fifth year in a row. This is a reminder that this is a season to not only be thankful for the incredible blessings that we have, but also to remember the neediest and generously serve those who are not as fortunate.

This is a quintessentially American holiday, and during this time, we give thanks to our friends and our family, for citizens who show compassion to those in need, and for neighbors who help strangers they've never met. We give thanks for the blessings of freedom and opportunity that previous generations worked so hard to secure for. And we give thanks for the service and sacrifice of our brave men and women in uniform who serve our Nation around the world. For those of you who are watching, you keep us safe, you make us proud, and you remind us of our own obligations to build on the work of our predecessors and leave something better for our own kids.

So, on behalf of the Obama family, I want to wish everybody a very happy Thanksgiving. Tomorrow, as we gather with our own friends and family, we'll count ourselves lucky that there's more to be thankful for than we can ever say and more to be hopeful for than we can ever imagine.

And now, before these turkeys get away: With the power vested in me, I want to grant Popcorn a full reprieve. Come on. [*Laughter*] I want to—Popcorn, you have a full reprieve from cranberry sauce and stuffing. We wish you well. And we're going to give Caramel a break as well.

All right? So—[*laughter*]. Congratulations, everybody. All right. Happy Thanksgiving, everybody. See you, Popcorn. Give them a big round of applause. All right, get out of the rain. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. on the North Portico at the White House.

Statement on the Observance of Hanukkah
November 27, 2013

Michelle and I send warm wishes to all those celebrating Hanukkah.

For the first time since the late 1800s—and for the last time until some 70,000 years from now—the first day of Hanukkah falls on Thanksgiving. It's an event so rare some have even coined it "Thanksgivukkah." As we gather with loved ones around the turkey, the menorah, or both, we celebrate some fortunate timing and give thanks for miracles both great and small.

Like the Pilgrims, the Maccabees at the center of the Hanukkah story made tremendous sacrifices so they could practice their religion in peace. In the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, they reclaimed their historic homeland. But the true miracle of Hanukkah was what came after those victories almost 2,200 years ago: The Jewish Temple was cleansed and consecrated, and the oil that was sufficient for only 1 day lasted for 8. As the first Hanukkah candle is lit, we are reminded that our task is not only to secure the blessing of freedom, but to make the most of that blessing once it is secure.

In that spirit, Michelle and I look forward to joining members of the Jewish community in America, in the State of Israel, and around the world as we work together to build a future that is bright and full of hope. From my family to yours, *Chag sameach.*

The President's Weekly Address
November 28, 2013

Hi, everybody. On behalf of all the Obamas, Michelle, Malia, Sasha, Bo, and the newest member of our family, Sunny, I want to wish you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving. We'll be spending today just like many of you, sitting down with family and friends to eat some good food, tell some stories, and watch a little football, and most importantly, count our blessings.

And as Americans, we have so much to be thankful for. We give thanks for the men and women who set sail for this land nearly four centuries ago, risking everything for the chance at a better life, and the people who were already here, our Native American brothers and sisters, for their generosity during that first Thanksgiving. We give thanks for the generations who followed, people of all races and religions, who arrived here from every country on Earth and worked to build something better for themselves and for us.

We give thanks for all our men and women in uniform and for their families, who are surely missing them very much today. We're grateful for their sacrifice too.

We give thanks for the freedoms they defend: the freedom to think what we want and say what we think; to worship according to our own beliefs; to choose our leaders and, yes, criticize them without punishment. People around the world are fighting and even dying for their chance at these freedoms. We stand with them in that struggle, and we give thanks for being free.

And we give thanks to everyone who's doing their part to make the United States a better, more compassionate nation, who spend their Thanksgiving volunteering at a soup kitchen or joining a service project or bringing food and cheer to a lonely neighbor. That big-hearted generosity is a central part of our American character. We believe in lending a hand to folks who need it. We believe in pitching in to solve problems even if they aren't our problems. And that's not a 1-day-a-year belief, it's part of the fabric of our Nation.

And we remember that many Americans need that helping hand right now: Americans who've lost their jobs and can't get a new one through no fault of their own, Americans who have been trapped in poverty and just need that helping hand to climb out, citizens whose prayers and hopes move us to act.

We're a people who are greater together than we are on our own. And that's what today is about. That's what every day should be about. No matter what our differences, we're all part of one American family. We're each other's keepers. We are one Nation under God. That core tenet of our American experience has guided us from the earliest days of our founding, and it will guide us to a future that's even brighter than today.

Thank you, God bless you, and from my family to yours, happy Thanksgiving.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on November 27 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on November 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 28.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Implementation Plan for the Whole-of-Government Vision Prescribed in the 2010 National Security Strategy
November 29, 2013

Dear _____:

In my National Security Strategy of 2010, I addressed how the United States would strengthen its global leadership position; end the war in Iraq; disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qa'ida; and achieve economic recovery at home and abroad. The Strategy recognized that we faced a world in transition; that we needed to reposition the United States to shape that transition effectively to meet our interests, and that, to be effective, a whole-of-government approach was necessary. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2012, section 1072, reinforced the importance of whole-of-government integration in this effort. In accordance with section 1072, I provided an implementation plan in September 2012 detailing our work to date to advance the whole-of-government effort.

I am writing to inform you of my intent to release a new National Security Strategy in early 2014. The new Strategy will update the vision I provided in 2010 and describe my Administration's national security priorities for the remainder of my term. Accordingly, we will submit a broader update on the whole-of-government implementation plan in the spring to reflect this new Strategy.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Barbara A. Mikulski, chairman, and Richard C. Shelby, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Carl M. Levin, chairman, and

James M. Inhofe, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Patricia L. Murray, chairman, and Jefferson B. Sessions III, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Budget; Robert Menendez, chairman, and Robert P. Corker, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Thomas R. Carper, chairman, and Thomas A. Coburn, ranking member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Dianne Feinstein, chairman, and C. Saxby Chambliss, vice chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; Patrick J. Leahy, chairman, and Charles E. Grassley, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; Harold D. Rogers, chairman, and Nita M. Lowey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, chairman, and Adam Smith, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; Paul D. Ryan, chairman, and Christopher Van Hollen, Jr., ranking member, House Committee on the Budget; Edward R. Royce, chairman, and Eliot L. Engel, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Michael T. McCaul, chairman, and Bennie G. Thompson, ranking member, House Committee on Homeland Security; Michael J. Rogers, chairman, and Charles A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger, ranking member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Robert W. Goodlatte, chairman, and John J. Conyers, Jr., ranking member, House Committee on the Judiciary; and Darrell E. Issa, chairman, and Elijah E. Cummings, ranking member, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Remarks on World AIDS Day
December 2, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, thank you, Grant, for your outstanding leadership of the Office of National AIDS Policy. And thanks to all of you for being here. This is a pretty distinguished crowd, I have to say, and it is wonderful to be here.

I should say, actually, welcome back, because many of you have joined us before as we've marked new milestones in our fight against HIV and AIDS. And I'm honored that you could join us in commemorating World AIDS Day, which was yesterday. And this is a time for remembering the friends and loved ones that we've lost, celebrating the extraordinary progress—thanks to some people in this room—that we've been able to make, and most importantly, recommitting ourselves to the mission that we share, which is achieving an AIDS-free generation.

I especially want to welcome ministers from our partner countries; members of my administration, including Secretary Sebelius, Secretary John Kerry; Congresswoman Barbara Lee; Mark Dybul from the Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. And we've also got here Francis Collins from the National Institutes of Health; Michel Sidibé from UNAIDS; Deborah von Zinkernagel, who's carrying on the great work of Eric Goosby as our Acting Global AIDS Coordinator; and our many friends from the philanthropic world, including Bill Gates. So thank you all for joining us here today.

Every year, this is a moment to reflect on how far we've come since the early days of the AIDS epidemic. And those of you who lived through it remember all too well the fear and the stigma and how hard people with HIV had to fight to be seen or heard or to be treated with basic compassion. And you remember how little we knew about how to prevent AIDS or how to treat it. What we did know was the devastation that it inflicted, striking down vibrant men and women in the prime of their lives and spreading from city to city and country to country seemingly overnight.

Today, that picture is transformed. Thanks to the courage and love of so many of you in this room and around the world, awareness has soared, research has surged. Prevention, treatment, and care are now saving millions of lives, not only in the world's richest countries, but in some of the world's poorest countries as well. And for many, with testing and access to the

right treatment, the disease that was once a death sentence now comes with a good chance at a healthy and productive life. And that's an extraordinary achievement.

As President, I've told you that in this fight, you'll have a partner in me. And I said that if the United States wanted to be the global leader in combating this disease, then we needed to act like it, by doing our part and by leading the world to do more together. And that's what we've done, in partnership with so many of you. We created the first comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy, rooted in a simple vision that every person should get access to life-extending care, regardless of age or gender, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic status.

We've continued to support the Ryan White CARE Act to help underserved communities, and we lifted the entry ban so that people with HIV are no longer barred from the United States, which led to the International AIDS Conference being held here last year for the very first time in over 20 years.

This summer, I issued an Executive order creating the HIV Care Continuum Initiative to boost our Federal efforts to prevent and treat HIV. Last month, I signed the HIV Organ Policy Equity Act to finally allow research into organ donations between people with HIV, a step achieved with bipartisan support. And thanks to the Affordable Care Act, millions of insured Americans will be able to get tested free of charge. Americans who were uninsured will now be able to have access to affordable health care coverage, and beginning in January, no American will be again denied health insurance because of their HIV status.

On World AIDS Day 2 years ago, I announced an additional $35 million for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, which helps people pay for lifesaving medications. At one time, the need was so great that over 9,000 people were on the wait list. We vowed to get those numbers down. And I'm proud to announce that as of last week, we have cleared that wait list. We are down to zero. And we're going to keep working to keep it down.

So we're making progress. But we're all here today because we know how much work remains to be done. Here in the United States, we need to keep focusing on investments to communities that are still being hit hardest, including gay and bisexual men, African Americans, and Latinos. We need to keep up the fight in our cities, including Washington, DC, which in recent years has reduced diagnosed infections by nearly half.

And we're going to keep pursuing scientific breakthroughs. Today I'm pleased to announce a new initiative at the National Institutes of Health to advance research into an HIV cure. We're going to redirect a hundred million dollars into this project to develop a new generation of therapies because the United States should be at the forefront of new discoveries into how to put HIV into long-term remission without requiring lifelong therapies or, better yet, eliminate it completely.

And of course, this fight extends far beyond our borders. When I became President, I inherited President Bush's phenomenal program, PEPFAR, which has helped millions around the world receive lifesaving treatment. And we haven't just sustained those efforts, we've expanded them, reaching and serving even more people, especially mothers and children. Earlier this year, PEPFAR reached a wonderful milestone: the 1 millionth baby born without HIV. And that alongside the rapid decline in new HIV infections and deaths from AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

On my visit to South Africa this year, I visited a clinic run by Bishop Desmond Tutu and had the honor of spending time with some of their extraordinary young patients and counselors and outreach workers and doctors. Every day, they are doing extraordinary work. And when you visit this facility, you cannot help but be inspired by what they do each and every day, in part thanks to the support of the United States of America. They're saving lives, and they're changing the way their country and the world approaches this disease. And that's work that we have to continue to advance.

On World AIDS Day 2 years ago, I set new prevention and treatment targets for PEPFAR,

like increasing the number of mothers we reach so that we prevent their children from becoming infected and helping 6 million people get treatment by the end of 2013. Today I'm proud to announce that we've not only reached our goal, we've exceeded our treatment target. So we've helped 6.7 million people receive lifesaving treatment. And we're going to keep at it. Which is why, after I leave here today, I'll be proud to sign the PEPFAR Stewardship and Oversight Act to keep this program going strong. [*Applause*] Count on the legislator to applaud legislation. [*Laughter*]

Now, looking ahead, it's time for the world to come together to set new goals. Right now we're working hard to get a permanent leader in place at PEPFAR, and once we do, one of our first items of business will be convening a meeting early next year so the United States and our partners worldwide—including governments, the Global Fund, UNAIDS, and civil society—can sit around one table and develop joint HIV prevention and treatment goals for the countries where we and the Global Fund do business. We'll hold each other accountable, and we'll continue to work to turn the tide of this epidemic together.

And that includes keeping up our support for the Global Fund. Its success speaks for itself. It's helping over 6 million people in over 140 countries receive antiretroviral therapy. And now it's time to replenish the fund. The United States will contribute $1 for every $2 pledged by other donors over the next 3 years, up to $5 billion total from the United States. And the United Kingdom has made a similar promise.

So today I want to urge all those who are attending the Global Fund's replenishment meetings both today and tomorrow to take up this commitment. Don't leave our money on the table. It's been inspiring to see the countries most affected by this disease vastly increase their own contributions to this fight, in some cases providing more than donor countries do. And that ought to inspire all of us to give more, to do more, so we can save more lives.

After all, none of the progress we've made against AIDS could have been achieved by a single government or foundation or corporation working alone. It's the result of countless people—including so many of you—working together from countries large and small, philanthropies, universities, media, civil society, activists. More than anything, I think it's thanks to the courageous people living with HIV around the world who've shared their stories. You've lent your strength, demanded your dignity be recognized, and led the fight to spare others the anguish of this disease.

We can't change the past or undo its wrenching pain. But what we can do—and what we have to do—is to chart a different future, guided by our love for those we couldn't save. That allows us to do everything we can, everything in our power to save those that we can. And that's my commitment to you as President.

The United States of America will remain the global leader in the fight against HIV and AIDS. We will stand with you every step of this journey until we reach the day that we know is possible, when all men and women can protect themselves from infection; a day when all people with HIV have access to the treatments that extend their lives; the day when there are no babies being born with HIV or AIDS and when we achieve, at long last, what was once hard to imagine, and that's an AIDS-free generation.

That's the world I want for my daughters. That's the world that all of us want for our families. And if we stay focused, if we keep fighting, and if we honor the memory of those that we've lost—if we summon the same courage that they displayed—by insisting on whatever it takes, however long it takes, I believe we're going to win this fight. And I'm confident that we'll do so together.

So thank you very much for your extraordinary efforts. Appreciate it. God bless you. Thank you. Thank you. Good work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his re-

marks, he referred to Grant Colfax, Director, Office of National AIDS Policy, who introduced the President; Mark Dybul, executive director, Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; Michel Sidibé, Executive Director, UNAIDS; William H. Gates III, cochair and trustee, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; former President George W. Bush; and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond M. Tutu of Cape Town, South Africa. He also referred to Executive Order 13649; and S. 1545, which was approved December 2 and assigned Public Law No. 113–56.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia

December 3, 2013

President Obama. Well, it's wonderful to welcome President Santos back to the White House. This is not his first visit, but it is the first time that I'm able to return the favor for the extraordinary hospitality that he and the Colombian people and his family showed me when I had a chance to travel there for the very successful Summit of the Americas.

We have had a excellent conversation, I think, reflecting on the deepening of what have already been very strong bilateral ties between our two countries. Not only do we continue to excel in security cooperation that has, I think, helped to facilitate the tremendous progress that's taken place in Colombia over the last decade, but precisely because of the success on the security front, we've also been able to widen our discussion to a wide—to a whole host of issues: how we can improve education and economic opportunity in Colombia, how we can work together on energy projects that are vital to the region, how we can take advantage of new technologies to expand the ability for a rural child to be exposed to the world, and how we can work in partnership together on many of the key regional challenges that take place.

We also had an opportunity to talk about the success so far of the free trade agreement and its implementation. There's still some details that are being worked on. Nevertheless, what we've seen is a 20-percent increase in trade between our two countries since its signing. That creates jobs in Colombia; it creates jobs here in the United States of America.

I congratulated President Santos on his bold and brave efforts to bring about a lasting and just peace inside of Colombia in his negotiations with the FARC. Obviously, this has been a longstanding conflict within Colombia. It is not easy; there are many challenges ahead. But the fact that he has taken this step, I think, is the right one because it sends a signal to the people of Colombia that it is possible to unleash the enormous potential if we can move beyond this conflict. But obviously, there are going to be some very challenging questions moving forward. I'm pleased to see the President's strong commitment on that front. The United States is supportive of those efforts.

And finally, I think what we've increasingly seen is Colombia's influence on the world stage. We supported Colombia's membership in the OECD because it's reflective of Colombia's rise. It continues to have a strong influence regionally. I emphasized to President Santos that the work and the efforts that he's made on issues like human rights and labor rights inside of Colombia are not only good for the Colombian people—and we want to encourage them—but they also show a path for countries that have had, in some cases, a difficult history moving forward into a 21st century that promises greater opportunity and prosperity and peace. And the influence that President Santos personally, as well as Colombia as a nation, has is only growing. And we think that's a positive because we consider Colombia a great friend and a great success.

Finally, I think it's worth mentioning that both Colombia and the United States have qualified for the World Cup. Obviously, we wish both teams well. I think it's fair to say that we will be rooting for our teams, so we don't know if they'll play each other, but I think it's a

great sign of the excellent sportsmen that we have in our countries, and the World Cup, I think, signifies also the bonds that all people have. So we're very excited to see how that event goes in Brazil, and we congratulate Brazil on hosting the World Cup.

So, Mr. President, welcome. And thank you again for your great hospitality. More importantly, thank you for your friendship and your leadership.

President Santos. Thank you so much, President Obama, for your welcome, and thank you again for this invitation. As you well said, this is not the first time that I've been in the White House, and this time my visit comes under very special circumstances.

The relations of our two countries are—find themselves at their best moment ever. And as a result, the agenda that we have discussed this morning is much broader than it's ever been. We have gone well beyond the usual items that we used to discuss, like security, like drug trafficking, and we are now expanding it to topics like education, energy, and mutual cooperation: what we can do regionally.

And I want to thank you especially, President Obama, for all the support that you have shown us in the process towards peace in Colombia. It's a process that is doing very well, and it is my hope that this is a conflict that will come to an end. We have been shedding blood for over 50 years, and the support of the United States and the entire world is decisive in reaching that peace we all want.

And I was telling President Obama that just as 50 years ago President Kennedy visited Colombia and launched the Alliance for Progress, we should think of something similar that we could do today, work together to launch a new alliance: an alliance for progress and peace, one that will help the entire region.

Circumstances are very different today, opportunities are different, and the technology we have at our disposal is very different, and therefore, there are many fronts in which we can work together. There are many synergies that we can generate as a result that will lead to positive results.

And we also talked about the cooperation that we have been carrying out together to benefit third countries, in particular, countries of Central America and the Caribbean. We will be tripling the joint operations we're going to be carrying out jointly. For example, just one case, we have 17,000 officers who have been trained in Colombia, officers who come from these countries. And this is the kind of thing we will continue doing together.

And finally, I also want to wish the United States all success in the World Cup. It is my hope, however, that our teams are not going to play—be playing each other very soon. I certainly hope they won't meet in the first round. But we can maybe eliminate the U.S. team later on. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. All right, we'll have to make a wager on that. [*Laughter*] We'll see if that—the actual game comes up. Thank you.

Thank you so much everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgent group. President Santos spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
December 3, 2013

All right. Thank you, Monica. Well, thanks to Monica, thanks to everybody standing behind me, and thanks for everybody out there who cares deeply about this issue. Monica's story is important, because for all the day-to-day fights here in Washington around the Affordable Care Act, it's stories like hers that should remind us why we took on this reform in the first place.

And for too long, few things left working families more vulnerable to the anxieties and insecurities of today's economy than a broken health care system. So we took up the fight because we believe that in America, nobody

should have to worry about going broke just because somebody in their family or they got sick. We believe that nobody should have to choose between putting food on their kids' table or taking them to see a doctor. We believe we're a better country than a country where we allow, every day, 14,000 Americans to lose their health care coverage; or where every year, tens of thousands of Americans died because they didn't have health care; or where out-of-pocket costs drove millions of citizens into poverty in the wealthiest nation on Earth. We thought we were better than that, and that's why we took this on.

And that's what's gotten lost a little bit over the last couple of months. And our focus, rightly, had to shift towards working 24/7 to fix the website, healthcare.gov, for the new marketplaces where people can buy affordable insurance plans. And today, the website is working well for the vast majority of users. More problems may pop up, as they always do when you're launching something new. And when they do, we'll fix those too. But what we also know is that after just the first month, despite all the problems in the rollout, about half a million people across the country are poised to gain health care coverage through marketplaces and Medicaid beginning on January 1, some for the very first time. We know that: half a million people. And that number is increasing every day, and it is going to keep growing and growing and growing because we know that there are 41 million people out there without health insurance. And we know there are a whole bunch of folks out there who are underinsured or don't have a good deal. And we know the demand is there, and we know that the product on these marketplaces is good and it provides choice and competition for people that allow them, in some cases for the very first time, to have the security that health insurance can provide.

The bottom line is, this law is working and will work into the future. People want the financial stability of health insurance. And we're going to keep on working to fix whatever problems come up. In any startup, any launch of a project this big that has an impact on one-sixth of our economy, whatever comes up we're going to just fix it because we know that the ultimate goal, the ultimate aim, is to make sure that people have basic security and the foundation for the good health that they need.

Now, we may never satisfy the law's opponents. I think that's fair to say. Some of them are rooting for this law to fail. That's not my opinion, by the way; they say it pretty explicitly. [*Laughter*] Some have already convinced themselves that the law has failed, regardless of the evidence. But I would advise them to check with the people who are here today and the people that they represent all across the country whose lives have been changed for the better by the Affordable Care Act.

The other day I got a letter from Julia Walsh in California. Earlier this year, Julia was diagnosed with leukemia and lymphoma. "I have a lot of things to worry about," she wrote. "But thanks to the [Affordable Care Act], there are lots of things I do not have to worry about, like . . . whether there will be a lifetime cap on benefits [or] whether my treatment will bankrupt my family. . . . I can't begin to tell you how much that peace of mind means. . . ." That's what the Affordable Care Act means to Julia. She already had insurance, by the way, but because this law banned lifetime limits on the care you or your family can receive, she's never going to have to choose between providing for her kids or getting herself well; she can do both.

Sam Weir, a doctor in North Carolina, e-mailed me the other day. "The coming years will be challenging for all of us in family medicine," he wrote. "But my colleagues and I draw strength from knowing that beginning with the new year, the preventive care many of our current patients have been putting off will be covered and the patients we have not yet seen will finally be able to get the care that they have long needed." That's the difference that the Affordable Care Act will make for many of Dr. Weir's patients. Because more than a hundred million Americans with insurance have gained access to recommended preventive care like mammograms or colonoscopies or flu shots or contraception to help them stay healthy, at no out-of-pocket cost.

At the young age of 23, Justine Ula is battling cancer for the second time. And the other day, her mom Joann e-mailed me from Cleveland University Hospital where Justine is undergoing treatment. She told me she stopped by the pharmacy to pick up Justine's medicine. If Justine were uninsured, it would have cost her $4,500. But she is insured because the Affordable Care Act has let her and 3 million other young people like Monica gain coverage by staying on their parent's plan until they're 26. And that means Justine's mom, all she had to cover was the $25 copay.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 7 million seniors and Americans with disabilities have saved an average of $1,200 on their prescription medicine. This year alone, 8.5 million families have actually gotten an average of a hundred dollars back from their insurance company—you don't hear that very often—[*laughter*]—because it spent too much on things like overhead and not enough on their care. And by the way, health care costs are rising at the slowest rate in 50 years. So we're actually bending the cost of health care overall, which benefits everybody.

So that's what this law means to millions of Americans. And my main message today is, we're not going back. We're not going to betray Monica or Julia or Sam or Justine or Joann. I mean, that seems to be the only alternative that Obamacare's critics have is, well, let's just go back to the status quo. Because they sure haven't presented an alternative. If you ask many of the opponents of this law what exactly they'd do differently, their answer seems to be, well, let's go back to the way things used to be.

Just the other day, the Republican leader in the Senate was asked what benefits people without health care might see from this law. And he refused to answer, even though there are dozens in this room and tens of thousands in his own State who are already on track to benefit from it. He just repeated "repeal" over and over and over again. And obviously, we've heard that from a lot of folks on that side of the aisle.

Look, I've always said I will work with anybody to implement and improve this law effectively. I mean, if you've got good ideas, bring them to me. Let's go. But we're not repealing it as long as I'm President, and I want everybody to be clear about that.

We will make it work for all Americans. If you don't like this law—[*applause*]. So, if despite all the millions of people who are benefiting from it, you still think this law is a bad idea, then you've got to tell us specifically what you'd do differently to cut costs, cover more people, make insurance more secure. You can't just say that the system was working with 41 million people without health insurance. You can't just say that the system's working when you've got a whole bunch of folks who thought they had decent insurance and then when they got sick, it turned out, it wasn't there for them or they were left with tens of thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs that were impossible for them to pay.

Right now what that law is doing——

[*At this point, a baby in the audience made a noise.*]

Yes, you agree with me. [*Laughter*] Right now what this law is doing is helping folks, and we're just getting started with the exchanges, just getting started with the marketplaces. So we're not going to walk away from it. If I've got to fight another 3 years to make sure this law works, then that's what I'll do. [*Applause*] That's what we'll do.

But what's important for everybody to remember is not only that the law has already helped millions of people, but that there are millions more who stand to be helped. And we've got to make sure they know that. And I've said very clearly that our poor execution in the first couple months on the website clouded the fact that there are a whole bunch of people who stand to benefit. Now that the website is working for the vast majority of people, we need to make sure that folks refocus on what's at stake here, which is the capacity for you or your families to be able to have the security of decent health insurance at a reasonable cost through choice and competition on this mar-

ketplace and tax credits that you may be eligible for that can save you hundreds of dollars in premium costs every month, potentially.

So we just need people to—now that we are getting the technology fixed, we need you to go back, take a look at what's actually going on, because it can make a difference in your lives and the lives of your families. And maybe it won't make a difference right now if you're feeling healthy, but I promise you, if somebody in your family, heaven forbid, gets sick, you'll see the difference. And it will make all the difference for you and your families.

So I'm going to need some help in spreading the word. I'm going to need some help in spreading the word. I need you to spread the word about the law, about its benefits, about its protections, about how folks can sign up. Tell your friends. Tell your family. Do not let the initial problems with the website discourage you because it's working better now and it's just going to keep on working better over time. Every day, I check to make sure that it's working better. [*Laughter*] And we've learned not to make wild promises about how perfectly smooth it's going to be at all times, but if you really want health insurance through the marketplaces, you're going to be able to get on and find the information that you need for your families at healthcare.gov.

So if you've already got health insurance or you've already taken advantage of the Affordable Care Act, you've got to tell your friends, you've got to tell your family. Tell your coworkers. Tell your neighbors. Let's help our fellow Americans get covered. Let's give every American a fighting chance in today's economy. All right?

Thank you so much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Monica S. Weeks, project coordinator, World Resources Institute, who introduced the President; Julia Richards Walsh, instructor, University of Southern California–Davis School of Gerontology; Samuel S. Weir, associate professor of family medicine, University of North Carolina School of Medicine; Poland, OH, residents Justine Ula and her mother Joann Russo; and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell.

Statement on the Resignation of Nancy H. Sutley as Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality

December 3, 2013

I want to thank Nancy Sutley for her counsel and for her service to the American people over the past 5 years. As one of my top advisers, Nancy has played a central role in overseeing many of our biggest environmental accomplishments, including establishing historic new fuel economy standards that will save consumers money, new national monuments that permanently protect sites unique to our country's rich history and natural heritage, our first comprehensive national ocean policy, and our climate action plan that will help leave our children a safer, healthier planet. Under her leadership, Federal agencies are meeting the goals I set for them at the beginning of the administration by using less energy, reducing pollution, and saving taxpayer dollars. Her efforts have made it clear that a healthy environment and a strong economy aren't mutually exclusive; they can go hand in hand. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Remarks at the Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus
December 4, 2013

Thank you so much. Please, please have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, thank you, Neera, for the wonderful introduction and sharing a story that resonated with me. There were a lot of parallels in my life and probably resonated with some of you.

Over the past 10 years, the Center for American Progress has done incredible work to shape the debate over expanding opportunity for all Americans. And I could not be more grateful to CAP not only for giving me a lot of good policy ideas, but also giving me a lot of staff. [*Laughter*] My friend, John Podesta, ran my transition; my Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough, did a stint at CAP. So you guys are obviously doing a good job training folks.

I also want to thank all the Members of Congress and my administration who are here today for the wonderful work that they do. I want to thank Mayor Gray and everyone here at THEARC for having me. This center, which I've been to quite a bit and have had a chance to see some of the great work that's done here—and all the nonprofits that call THEARC home offer access to everything from education to health care to a safe shelter from the streets, which means that you're harnessing the power of community to expand opportunity for folks here in DC. And your work reflects a tradition that runs through our history: the belief that we're greater together than we are on our own. And that's what I've come here to talk about today.

Now, over the last 2 months, Washington has been dominated by some pretty contentious debates; I think that's fair to say. And between a reckless shutdown by congressional Republicans in an effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act and admittedly poor execution on my administration's part in implementing the latest stage of the new law, nobody has acquitted themselves very well these past few months. So it's not surprising that the American people's frustrations with Washington are at an alltime high.

But we know that people's frustrations run deeper than these most recent political battles. Their frustration's rooted in their own daily battles: to make ends meet, to pay for college, buy a home, save for retirement. It's rooted in the nagging sense that no matter how hard they work, the deck is stacked against them. And it's rooted in the fear that their kids won't be better off than they were. They may not follow the constant back and forth in Washington or all the policy details, but they experience in a very personal way the relentless, decades-long trend that I want to spend some time talking about today. And that is a dangerous and growing inequality and lack of upward mobility that has jeopardized middle class America's basic bargain: that if you work hard, you have a chance to get ahead.

I believe this is the defining challenge of our time: making sure our economy works for every working American. It's why I ran for President. It was at the center of last year's campaign. It drives everything I do in this office. And I know I've raised this issue before, and some will ask why I raise the issue again right now. I do it because the outcomes of the debates we're having right now—whether it's health care or the budget or reforming our housing and financial systems—all these things will have real, practical implications for every American. And I am convinced that the decisions we make on these issues over the next few years will determine whether or not our children will grow up in an America where opportunity is real.

Now, the premise that we're all created equal is the opening line in the American story. And while we don't promise equal outcomes, we've strived to deliver equal opportunity: the idea that success doesn't depend on being born into wealth or privilege, it depends on effort and merit. And with every chapter we've added to that story, we've worked hard to put those words into practice.

It was Abraham Lincoln, a self-described "poor man's son," who started a system of land-

grant colleges all over this country so that any poor man's son could go learn something new. When farms gave way to factories, a rich man's son named Teddy Roosevelt fought for an 8-hour workday, protections for workers, and busted monopolies that kept prices high and wages low. When millions lived in poverty, FDR fought for Social Security and insurance for the unemployed and a minimum wage. When millions died without health insurance, LBJ fought for Medicare and Medicaid.

Together, we forged a New Deal, declared a War on Poverty and a Great Society. We built a ladder of opportunity to climb and stretched out a safety net beneath so that if we fell, it wouldn't be too far, and we could bounce back. And as a result, America built the largest middle class the world has ever known. And for the three decades after World War II, it was the engine of our prosperity.

Now, we can't look at the past through rose-colored glasses. The economy didn't always work for everyone. Racial discrimination locked millions out of poverty—or out of opportunity. Women were too often confined to a handful of often poorly paid professions. And it was only through painstaking struggle that more women and minorities and Americans with disabilities began to win the right to more fairly and fully participate in the economy.

Nevertheless, during the post–World War II years, the economic ground felt stable and secure for most Americans, and the future looked brighter than the past. And for some, that meant following in your old man's footsteps at the local plant, and you knew that a blue-collar job would let you buy a home and a car, maybe a vacation once in a while, health care, a reliable pension. For others, it meant going to college, in some cases, maybe the first in your family to go to college. And it meant graduating without taking on loads of debt and being able to count on advancement through a vibrant job market.

Now, it's true that those at the top, even in those years, claimed a much larger share of income than the rest: The top 10 percent consistently took home about one-third of our national income. But that kind of inequality took place in a dynamic market economy where everyone's wages and incomes were growing. And because of upward mobility, the guy on the factory floor could picture his kid running the company some day.

But starting in the late seventies, this social compact began to unravel. Technology made it easier for companies to do more with less, eliminating certain job occupations. A more competitive world let companies ship jobs anywhere. And as good manufacturing jobs automated or headed offshore, workers lost their leverage, jobs paid less and offered fewer benefits.

As values of community broke down and competitive pressure increased, businesses lobbied Washington to weaken unions and the value of the minimum wage. As a trickle-down ideology became more prominent, taxes were slashed for the wealthiest, while investments in things that make us all richer, like schools and infrastructure, were allowed to wither. And for a certain period of time, we could ignore this weakening economic foundation, in part because more families were relying on two earners as women entered the workforce. We took on more debt financed by a juiced-up housing market. But when the music stopped and the crisis hit, millions of families were stripped of whatever cushion they had left.

And the result is an economy that's become profoundly unequal and families that are more insecure. I'll just give you a few statistics. Since 1979, when I graduated from high school, our productivity is up by more than 90 percent, but the income of the typical family has increased by less than 8 percent. Since 1979, our economy has more than doubled in size, but most of that growth has flowed to a fortunate few.

The top 10 percent no longer takes in one-third of our income, it now takes half. Whereas in the past, the average CEO made about 20 to 30 times the income of the average worker, today's CEO now makes 273 times more. And meanwhile, a family in the top 1 percent has a net worth 288 times higher than the typical family, which is a record for this country.

So the basic bargain at the heart of our economy has frayed. In fact, this trend towards

growing inequality is not unique to America's market economy. Across the developed world, inequality has increased. Some of you may have seen, just last week, the Pope himself spoke about this at eloquent length. "How can it be," he wrote, "that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?"

But this increasing inequality is most pronounced in our country, and it challenges the very essence of who we are as a people. Understand, we've never begrudged success in America, we aspire to it. We admire folks who start new businesses, create jobs, and invent the products that enrich our lives, and we expect them to be rewarded handsomely for it. In fact, we've often accepted more income inequality than many other nations for one big reason: because we were convinced that America is a place where even if you're born with nothing, with a little hard work, you can improve your own situation over time and build something better to leave your kids. As Lincoln once said, "While we do not propose any war upon capital, we do wish to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with everybody else."

The problem is that alongside increased inequality, we've seen diminished levels of upward mobility in recent years. A child born in the top 20 percent has about a 2-in-3 chance of staying at or near the top. A child born into the bottom 20 percent has a less than 1-in-20 shot at making it to the top. He's 10 times likelier to stay where he is. In fact, statistics show not only that our levels of income inequality rank near countries like Jamaica and Argentina, but that it is harder today for a child born here in America to improve her station in life than it is for children in most of our wealthy allies: countries like Canada or Germany or France. They have greater mobility than we do, not less.

The idea that so many children are born into poverty in the wealthiest nation on Earth is heartbreaking enough. But the idea that a child may never be able to escape that poverty because she lacks a decent education or health care or a community that views her future as their own, that should offend all of us, and it should compel us to action. We are a better country than this.

So let me repeat: The combined trends of increased inequality and decreasing mobility pose a fundamental threat to the American Dream, our way of life, and what we stand for around the globe. And it is not simply a moral claim that I'm making here. There are practical consequences to rising inequality and reduced mobility.

For one thing, these trends are bad for our economy. One study finds that growth is more fragile and recessions are more frequent in countries with greater inequality. And that makes sense. When families have less to spend, that means businesses have fewer customers and households rack up greater mortgage and credit card debt. Meanwhile, concentrated wealth at the top is less likely to result in the kind of broadly based consumer spending that drives our economy, and together with lax regulation, may contribute to risky speculative bubbles.

And rising inequality and declining mobility are also bad for our families and social cohesion, not just because we tend to trust our institutions less, but studies show, we actually tend to trust each other less when there's greater inequality. And greater inequality is associated with less mobility between generations. That means it's not just temporary; the effects last. It creates a vicious cycle. For example, by the time she turns 3 years old, a child born into a low-income home hears 30 million fewer words than a child from a well-off family, which means by the time she starts school, she's already behind, and that deficit can compound itself over time.

And finally, rising inequality and declining mobility are bad for our democracy. Ordinary folks can't write massive campaign checks or hire high-priced lobbyists and lawyers to secure policies that tilt the playing field in their favor at everyone else's expense. And so people get the bad taste that the system's rigged, and that increases cynicism and polarization, and it decreases the political participation that is a

requisite part of our system of self-government.

So this is an issue that we have to tackle head on. And if in fact the majority of Americans agree that our number-one priority is to restore opportunity and broad-based growth for all Americans, the question is, why has Washington consistently failed to act? And I think a big reason is the myths that have developed around the issue of inequality.

First, there is the myth that this is a problem restricted to a small share of predominantly minority poor, that this isn't a broad-based problem, this is a Black problem or a Hispanic problem or a Native American problem. Now, it's true that the painful legacy of discrimination means that African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans are far more likely to suffer from a lack of opportunity: higher unemployment, higher poverty rates. It's also true that women still make 77 cents on the dollar compared to men. So we're going to need strong application of antidiscrimination laws. We're going to need immigration reform that grows the economy and takes people out of the shadows. We're going to need targeted initiatives to close those gaps.

But here's an important point. The decades-long shifts in the economy have hurt all groups: poor and middle class, inner-city and rural folks, men and women, and Americans of all races. And as a consequence, some of the social patterns that contribute to declining mobility that were once attributed to the urban poor that's a particular problem for the inner city—single-parent households or drug abuse—it turns out, now we're seeing that pop up everywhere.

A new study shows that disparities in education, mental health, obesity, absent fathers, isolation from church, isolation from community groups—these gaps are now as much about growing up rich or poor as they are about anything else. The gap in test scores between poor kids and wealthy kids is now nearly twice what it is between White kids and Black kids. Kids with working class parents are 10 times likelier than kids with middle or upper class parents to go through a time when their parents have no income. So the fact is this: The opportunity gap in America is now as much about class as it is about race, and that gap is growing.

So if we're going to take on growing inequality and try to improve upward mobility for all people, we've got to move beyond the false notion that this is an issue exclusively of minority concern. And we have to reject a politics that suggests any effort to address it in a meaningful way somehow pits the interests of a deserving middle class against those of an undeserving poor in search of handouts.

Second, we need to dispel the myth that the goals of growing the economy and reducing inequality are necessarily in conflict, when they should actually work in concert. We know from our history that our economy grows best from the middle out, when growth is more widely shared. And we know that beyond a certain level of inequality, growth actually slows altogether.

Third, we need to set aside the belief that government cannot do anything about reducing inequality. It's true that government cannot prevent all the downsides of the technological change and global competition that are out there right now, and some of those forces are also some of the things that are helping us grow. And it's also true that some programs in the past, like welfare before it was reformed, were sometimes poorly designed, created disincentives to work.

But we've also seen how government action, time and again, can make an enormous difference in increasing opportunity and bolstering ladders into the middle class. Investments in education, laws establishing collective bargaining, and a minimum wage—these all contributed to rising standards of living for massive numbers of Americans. Likewise, when previous generations declared that every citizen of this country deserved a basic measure of security—a floor through which they could not fall—we helped millions of Americans live in dignity and gave millions more the confidence to aspire to something better, by taking a risk on a great idea.

Without Social Security, nearly half of seniors would be living in poverty. Half. Today,

fewer than 1 in 10 do. Before Medicare, only half of all seniors had some form of health insurance. Today, virtually all do. And because we've strengthened that safety net and expanded prowork and profamily tax credits like the earned income tax credit, a recent study found that the poverty rate has fallen by 40 percent since the 1960s. And these endeavors didn't just make us a better country, they reaffirmed that we are a great country.

So we can make a difference on this. In fact, that's our generation's task: to rebuild America's economic and civic foundation to continue the expansion of opportunity for this generation and the next generation. And like Neera, I take this personally. I'm only here because this country educated my grandfather on the GI bill. When my father left and my mom hit hard times trying to raise my sister and me while she was going to school, this country helped make sure we didn't go hungry. When Michelle, the daughter of a shift worker at a water plant and a secretary, wanted to go to college, just like me, this country helped us afford it until we could pay it back.

So what drives me as a grandson, a son, a father—as an American—is to make sure that every striving, hard-working, optimistic kid in America has the same incredible chance that this country gave me. It has been the driving force between everything we've done these past 5 years. And over the course of the next year and for the rest of my Presidency, that's where you should expect my administration to focus all our efforts.

Now, you'll be pleased to know, this is not a State of the Union Address. [*Laughter*] And many of the ideas that can make the biggest difference in expanding opportunity I've presented before. But let me offer a few key principles, just a roadmap that I believe should guide us in both our legislative agenda and our administrative efforts.

To begin with, we have to continue to relentlessly push a growth agenda. It may be true that in today's economy, growth alone does not guarantee higher wages and incomes. We've seen that. But what's also true is, we can't tackle inequality if the economic pie is shrinking or stagnant. The fact is, if you're a progressive and you want to help the middle class and the working poor, you've still got to be concerned about competitiveness and productivity and business confidence that spurs private sector investment.

And that's why, from day one, we've worked to get the economy growing and help our businesses hire. And thanks to their resilience and innovation, they've created nearly 8 million new jobs over the past 44 months. And now we've got to grow the economy even faster. And we've got to keep working to make America a magnet for good, middle class jobs to replace the ones that we've lost in recent decades: jobs in manufacturing and energy and infrastructure and technology.

And that means simplifying our corporate Tax Code in a way that closes wasteful loopholes and ends incentives to ship jobs overseas. We can—and by broadening the base, we can actually lower rates to encourage more companies to hire here and use some of the money we save to create good jobs rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our airports and all the infrastructure our businesses need.

It means a trade agenda that grows exports and works for the middle class. It means streamlining regulations that are outdated or unnecessary or too costly. And it means coming together around a responsible budget, one that grows our economy faster right now and shrinks our long-term deficits; one that unwinds the harmful sequester cuts that haven't made a lot of sense and then frees up resources to invest in things like the scientific research that's always unleashed new innovation and new industries.

When it comes to our budget, we should not be stuck in a stale debate from 2 years ago or 3 years ago. A relentlessly growing deficit of opportunity is a bigger threat to our future than our rapidly shrinking fiscal deficit.

So that's step one towards restoring mobility: making sure our economy is growing faster. Step two is making sure we empower more Americans with the skills and education they need to compete in a highly competitive global economy.

We know that education is the most important predictor of income today, so we launched a Race to the Top in our schools. We're supporting States that have raised standards for teaching and learning. We're pushing for redesigned high schools that graduate more kids with the technical training and apprenticeships and in-demand, high-tech skills that can lead directly to a good job and a middle class life.

We know it's harder to find a job today without some higher education, so we've helped more students go to college with grants and loans that go farther than before. We've made it more practical to repay those loans. And today, more students are graduating from college than ever before. And we're also pursuing an aggressive strategy to promote innovation that reins in tuition costs. We've got to lower costs so that young people are not burdened by enormous debt when they make the right decision to get higher education. And next week, Michelle and I will bring together college presidents and nonprofits to lead a campaign to help more low-income students attend and succeed in college.

But while higher education may be the surest path to the middle class, it's not the only one. So we should offer our people the best technical education in the world. That's why we've worked to connect local businesses with community colleges so that workers, young and old, can earn the new skills that earn them more money.

And I've also embraced an idea that I know all of you at the Center for American Progress have championed—and by the way, Republican Governors in a couple of States have championed—and that's making high-quality preschool available to every child in America. We know that kids in these programs grow up likelier to get more education, earn higher wages, form more stable families of their own. It starts a virtuous cycle, not a vicious one. And we should invest in that. We should give all of our children that chance.

And as we empower our young people for future success, the third part of this middle class economics is empowering our workers. It's time to ensure our collective bargaining laws function as they're supposed to so unions have a level playing field to organize for a better deal for workers and better wages for the middle class. It's time to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act so that women will have more tools to fight pay discrimination. It's time to pass the non—Employment Non-Discrimination Act so workers can't be fired for who they are or who they love.

And even though we're bringing manufacturing jobs back to America—we're creating more good-paying jobs in education and health care and business services—we know that we're going to have a greater and greater portion of our people in the service sector. And we know that there are airport workers and fast food workers and nurse assistants and retail salespeople who work their tails off and are still living at or barely above poverty. And that's why it's well past the time to raise a minimum wage that in real terms right now is below where it was when Harry Truman was in office.

This shouldn't be an ideological question. It was Adam Smith, the father of free-market economics, who once said, "They who feed, clothe, and lodge the whole body of the people should have such a share of the produce of their own labor as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged." And for those of you who don't speak old English—[*laughter*]—let me translate. It means if you work hard, you should make a decent living. If you work hard, you should be able to support a family.

Now, we all know the arguments that have been used against a higher minimum wage. Some say it actually hurts low-wage workers: Business will be less likely to hire them. But there's no solid evidence that a higher minimum wage costs jobs, and research shows, it raises incomes for low-wage workers and boosts short-term economic growth.

Others argue that if we raise the minimum wage, companies will just pass those costs on to consumers. But a growing chorus of businesses, small and large, argue differently. And already, there are extraordinary companies in America that provide decent wages, salaries, and benefits and training for their workers and deliver a great product to consumers.

SAS in North Carolina offers childcare and sick leave. REI, a company my Secretary of the Interior used to run, offers retirement plans and strives to cultivate a good work balance. There are companies out there that do right by their workers. They recognize that paying a decent wage actually helps their bottom line, reduces turnover. It means workers have more money to spend, to save, maybe eventually start a business of their own.

A broad majority of Americans agree we should raise the minimum wage. That's why last month voters in New Jersey decided to become the 20th State to raise theirs even higher. That's why yesterday the DC Council voted to do it too. I agree with those voters. I agree with those voters, and I'm going to keep pushing until we get a higher minimum wage for hard-working Americans across the entire country. It will be good for our economy. It will be good for our families.

Number four, as I alluded to earlier, we still need targeted programs for the communities and workers that have been hit hardest by economic change and the great recession. These communities are no longer limited to the inner city. They're found in neighborhoods hammered by the housing crisis, manufacturing towns hit hard by years of plants packing up, landlocked rural areas where young folks oftentimes feel like they've got to leave just to find a job. There are communities that just aren't generating enough jobs anymore.

So we've put forward new plans to help these communities and their residents, because we've watched cities like Pittsburgh or my hometown of Chicago revamp themselves. And if we give more cities the tools to do it—not handouts, but a hand up—cities like Detroit can do it too. So in a few weeks, we'll announce the first of these Promise Zones, urban and rural communities where we're going to support local efforts focused on a national goal, and that is, a child's course in life should not be determined by the zip code he's born in, but by the strength of his work ethic and the scope of his dreams.

And we're also going to have to do more for the long-term unemployed. For people who have been out of work for more than 6 months, often through no fault of their own, life is a catch-22. Companies won't give their résumé an honest look because they've been laid off so long, but they've been laid off so long because companies won't give their résumé an honest look. [*Laughter*] And that's why earlier this year, I challenged CEOs from some of America's best companies to give these Americans a fair shot. And next month, many of them will join us at the White House for an announcement about this.

Fifth, we've got to revamp retirement to protect Americans in their golden years, to make sure another housing collapse doesn't steal the savings in their homes. We've also got to strengthen our safety net for a new age so it doesn't just protect people who hit a run of bad luck from falling into poverty, but also propels them back out of poverty.

Today, nearly half of full-time workers and 80 percent of part-time workers don't have a pension or retirement account at their job. About half of all households don't have any retirement savings. So we're going to have to do more to encourage private savings and shore up the promise of Social Security for future generations. And remember, these are promises we made to one another. We don't do it to replace the free market, but we do it to reduce risk in our society by giving people the ability to take a chance and catch them if they fall. One study shows that more than half of Americans will experience poverty at some point during their adult lives. Think about that. This is not an isolated situation. More than half of Americans at some point in their lives will experience poverty.

That's why we have nutrition assistance or the program known as SNAP, because it makes a difference for a mother who's working, but is just having a hard time putting food on the table for her kids. That's why we have unemployment insurance, because it makes a difference for a father who lost his job and is out there looking for a new one that he can keep a roof over his kids' heads. By the way, Christmastime is no time for Congress to tell more than 1 million of these Americans that they have lost

their unemployment insurance, which is what will happen if Congress does not act before they leave on their holiday vacation.

The point is, these programs are not typically hammocks for people to just lie back and relax. These programs are almost always temporary means for hard-working people to stay afloat while they try to find a new job or go into school to retrain themselves for the jobs that are out there or sometimes just to cope with a bout of bad luck. Progressives should be open to reforms that actually strengthen these programs and make them more responsive to a 21st-century economy. For example, we should be willing to look at fresh ideas to revamp unemployment and disability programs to encourage faster and higher rates of reemployment without cutting benefits. We shouldn't weaken fundamental protections built over generations, because given the constant churn in today's economy and the disabilities that many of our friends and neighbors live with, they're needed more than ever. We should strengthen them and adapt them to new circumstances so they work even better.

But understand that these programs of social insurance benefit all of us, because we don't know when we might have a run of bad luck. We don't know when we might lose a job. Of course, for decades, there was one yawning gap in the safety net that did more than anything else to expose working families to the insecurities of today's economy: namely, our broken health care system.

That's why we fought for the Affordable Care Act, because 14,000 Americans lost their health insurance every single day and even more died each year because they didn't have health insurance at all. We did it because millions of families who thought they had coverage were driven into bankruptcy by out-of-pocket costs that they didn't realize would be there. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens couldn't get any coverage at all. Dr. King once said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

Well, not anymore. Because in the 3 years since we passed this law, the share of Americans with insurance is up, the growth of health care costs are down to their slowest rate in 50 years. More people have insurance, and more have new benefits and protections: a hundred million Americans who have gained the right for free preventive care like mammograms and contraception; the more than 7 million Americans who have saved an average of $1,200 on their prescription medicine; every American who won't go broke when they get sick because their insurance can't limit their care anymore.

More people without insurance have gained insurance: more than 3 million young Americans who have been able to stay on their parent's plan, the more than half a million Americans and counting who are poised to get covered starting on January 1, some for the very first time.

And it is these numbers—not the ones in any poll—that will ultimately determine the fate of this law. It's the measurable outcomes in reduced bankruptcies and reduced hours that have been lost because somebody couldn't make it to work and healthier kids with better performance in schools and young entrepreneurs who have the freedom to go out there and try a new idea—those are the things that will ultimately reduce a major source of inequality and help ensure more Americans get the start that they need to succeed in the future.

I have acknowledged more than once that we didn't roll out parts of this law as well as we should have. But the law is already working in major ways that benefit millions of Americans right now, even as we've begun to slow the rise in health care costs, which is good for family budgets, good for Federal and State budgets, and good for the budgets of businesses, small and large. So this law is going to work. And for the sake of our economic security, it needs to work.

And as people in States as different as California and Kentucky sign up every single day for health insurance, signing up in droves, they're proving, they want that economic security. If the Senate Republican leader still thinks he is going to be able to repeal this someday, he might want to check with the more than

60,000 people in his home State who are already set to finally have coverage that frees them from the fear of financial ruin and lets them afford to take their kids to see a doctor.

So let me end by addressing the elephant in the room here, which is the seeming inability to get anything done in Washington these days. I realize we are not going to resolve all of our political debates over the best ways to reduce inequality and increase upward mobility this year or next year or in the next 5 years. But it is important that we have a serious debate about these issues. For the longer that current trends are allowed to continue, the more it will feed the cynicism and fear that many Americans are feeling right now: that they'll never be able to repay the debt they took on to go to college; they'll never be able to save enough to retire; they'll never see their own children land a good job that supports a family.

And that's why, even as I will keep on offering my own ideas for expanding opportunity, I'll also keep challenging and welcoming those who oppose my ideas to offer their own. If Republicans have concrete plans that will actually reduce inequality, build the middle class, provide more ladders of opportunity to the poor, let's hear them. I want to know what they are. If you don't think we should raise the minimum wage, let's hear your idea to increase people's earnings. If you don't think every child should have access to preschool, tell us what you'd do differently to give them a better shot.

If you still don't like Obamacare—and I know you don't—[*laughter*]—even though it's built on market-based ideas of choice and competition in the private sector, then you should explain how exactly you'd cut costs and cover more people and make insurance more secure. You owe it to the American people to tell us what you are for, not just what you're against. That way we can have a vigorous and meaningful debate. That's what the American people deserve. That's what the times demand. It's not enough anymore to just say we should just get our government out of the way and let the unfettered market take care of it, for our experience tells us, that's just not true.

Look, I've never believed that government can solve every problem or should, and neither do you. We know that ultimately our strength is grounded in our people: individuals out there, striving, working, making things happen. It depends on community, a rich and generous sense of community; that's at the core of what happens at THEARC here every day. You understand that turning back rising inequality and expanding opportunity requires parents taking responsibility for their kids, kids taking responsibility to work hard. It requires religious leaders who mobilize their congregations to rebuild neighborhoods block by block, requires civic organizations that can help train the unemployed, link them with businesses for the jobs of the future. It requires companies and CEOs to set an example by providing decent wages and salaries and benefits for their workers and a shot for somebody who is down on his or her luck. We know that's our strength: our people, our communities, our businesses.

But government can't stand on the sidelines in our efforts because government is us. It can and should reflect our deepest values and commitments. And if we refocus our energies on building an economy that grows for everybody and gives every child in this country a fair chance at success, then I remain confident that the future still looks brighter than the past and that the best days for this country we love are still ahead.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Neera Tanden, president, and John D. Podesta, chair, Center for American Progress; Pope Francis; Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell; and his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng and mother-in-law Marian Robinson. He also referred to S. 815.

Remarks at the Affordable Care Act Youth Summit
December 4, 2013

Hey! Hello, everybody. Hello, hello. Good to see you. Everybody, sit down. Good afternoon. Welcome to the White House. This is a little bit of a rowdy bunch. [*Laughter*]

The—well, it is wonderful to be with all of you, and I couldn't be more appreciative of all the stuff that you guys are doing all across the country in your communities, in your organizations. There was a time when I was a young invincible. [*Laughter*] After 5 years in this office, people don't call me that anymore. [*Laughter*]

But I just wanted to drop by and say thank you for everything that you've done and will do to spread the word about the Affordable Care Act and what it means for young people. About a year ago, I got a letter from a woman in her twenties; she had just graduated from law school. And she wrote: "Thank you for making health care reform a priority. If you hadn't, you probably would have fewer gray hairs right now." [*Laughter*] That's a good point. But her story is a reminder that the law was worth a few gray hairs, because she was one of the 3.1 million young people that this law helped to cover because they could join their parent's plan. And that means that when she was diagnosed with a potentially deadly autoimmune disorder, she got the care she needed: medications, blood transfusions, ultimately lifesaving surgery.

She was able to stay in school, graduate first in her class, find a job in her field. And in the letter she wrote: "I'm grateful because the Affordable Care Act saved my life. It saved my family from bankruptcy, and it gave me a future." So that's what this law is about: health care that's there for you when you need it, financial protection for you and your family if you get sick, the security of knowing that an illness or an accident is not going to completely derail your dreams.

And there are a lot of benefits that are especially important to young people. Insurance companies now have to provide free preventive care that will help you stay healthy. They'll have to provide contraceptive care for women at no extra cost. If you wanted to take a chance and start your own business or try multiple careers like many young people do—particularly in this economy—before you settle down, you're not going to have to wonder whether or not you can do that because you're worried about coverage. When you do settle down and start a family, maternal care will be covered. If you're a woman, you won't be charged twice as much as men because you're the one carrying the baby.

So this law is already making a difference for millions of young people, and it's about to help millions more. About half a million people across the country already are poised to gain coverage on January 1, some for the very first time. One recent article reported that a surprisingly large number of young people are signing up. And there's a good reason for that: The law works. Most young people without insurance can now get covered for under a hundred bucks a month.

Now, I am not allowed, for security reasons, to have an iPhone. [*Laughter*] I don't know what your bills are. I have noticed that Sasha and Malia seem to spend a lot of time on it. [*Laughter*] My suspicion is that for a lot of you, between your cable bill, your phone bill, you're spending more than a hundred bucks a month. The idea that you wouldn't want to make sure that you've got the health security and financial security that comes with health insurance for less than that price, you guys are smarter than that. And most young people are as well.

The product is good. It's affordable. People want financial stability of health insurance. We're going to keep working through any glitches, problems that may come up. Obviously, the website, when it was first launched, wasn't in tiptop shape, to say the least. But we have been, 24/7, going at it. And now, for the vast majority of users, it's working. And there will be other things that come up during the course of the next several months, because you're starting off a new program that has an impact on one-sixth

of the economy. This is a "big deal," to quote Joe Biden. And so—[*laughter*].

But we're just going to keep on working on it and improving it and refining it. And if we see a problem, we're going to fix it. But we're not repealing it—not as long as I'm President—particularly because the folks who are criticizing it don't seem to have any ideas in terms of how to reduce costs, ensure millions of people get coverage for the first time, make sure that insurance is more secure. Those are things that the law is already doing.

And we're going to have to just make sure that people know about it. And that's why I'm here, because I need your help. That's why you're here, because you know I need your help. Believe it or not, there are actually organizations that are out there working to convince young people not to get insurance.

Now, think about that. That's a really bizarre way to spend your money, to try to convince people not to get health insurance, not to get free preventive care, not to make sure that they're able to survive an accident or an illness. If I had that much money, I wouldn't be spending it that way. And some of these ad campaigns are backed by well-funded special interest groups. I assume they've got great health care.

And just remember and remind your friends and your peers: Imagine what happens if you get sick, what happens with the massive bills. I—the people who are running those ads, they're not going to pay for your illness. You're going to pay for it, or your family is going to pay for it. And that's hard to imagine.

Look, I do remember what it's like being 27 or 28, and aside from the occasional basketball injury, most of the time I kind of felt like I had nothing to worry about. Of course, that's what most people think until they have something to worry about. But at that point, oftentimes it's too late. And sometimes in this debate, what we've heard are people saying, well, I don't need this, I don't want this. What's—why are you impinging on my freedom to do whatever I want?

And part of what I say to folks when they tell me that is, if you get sick and you get to the hospital and you don't have any coverage, then somebody else is also going to be paying for it. It may be your family that can't afford it, or it may be everybody else who does have health insurance and is acting responsibly and is essentially subsidizing for your care. And that's not what I think most young people want. They want to be independent, and this is part of feeling and being, financially and from a health perspective, secure.

So I'm going to need you all to spread the word about how the Affordable Care Act really works, what its benefits are, what its protections are, and most importantly, how people can sign up. I know people call this law Obamacare. And that's okay—[*laughter*]—because I do care, and—[*laughter*]—I do. I care about you. I care about families. I care about Americans.

But no matter how much I care, the truth is, is that for your friends and your family, the most important source of information is not going to be me, it's going to be you. They are going to trust you. If you're taking them on a website, walking them through it, saying, look at the price you're able to get, look at the benefits you're able to get, that's what's going to be making a difference.

So if you're a student body president, set up a conference on campus. If you work at a nonprofit, open your doors and use your e-mail list to help people learn the facts. If you've got a radio show, spread the word on air. If you're a bartender, have a happy hour—[*laughter*]—and also probably get health insurance, because a lot of bartenders don't have it. Post something on your Facebook or Instagram. You can tweet using the hashtag #getcovered. But do whatever it takes to make sure people have the information they need to make the decision that's right for them.

If you're in a State that has its own State exchange, they're probably doing a lot of activities, and you should plug into those as well. If you're in a State that so far has not decided to set up a State exchange, then obviously, we can make sure that you have all the information you need to succeed. But the bottom line is I'm going to need you, and the country needs

you. And a lot of your friends and peers, they may not know that they need you, but if something happens somewhere down the road where they really need to get to a hospital or a doctor, the fact that you have talked to them and gotten them involved is going to make all the difference in the world.

And finally, let me just make a broader point to all the young people here. This whole exercise obviously has huge implications for this country's future, because if we can start bringing down health care costs, make sure people are covered, give people financial security, that's good for the economy, it's good for businesses, it's good for the Federal budget.

But I hope you haven't been discouraged by how hard it's been, because stuff that's worth it's always hard. The civil rights movement was hard. Getting women the right to vote, that was hard. Making sure that workers had the right to organize, that was hard. It's never been easy for us to change how we do business in this country and particularly to address needs that a lot of people aren't worried about on a day-to-day, constant basis, but then suddenly are desperately worried about it when a mishap happens.

So this has been the case for Social Security, for Medicare, for all the great social progress that we've made in this country. And I wanted to say all that just because my hope is not only that you work hard to help folks get signed up today and tomorrow and next week, but I look around the room and I see a lot of leaders who are going to be leading the charge well into the future on a whole range of issues. Don't get discouraged. Be persistent. You may get a few gray hairs as a consequence—[*laughter*]—but I think at the end of the day, you'll think it's worth it. All right?

Thank you, guys. See you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks on the Death of Former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa

December 5, 2013

At his trial in 1964, Nelson Mandela closed his statement from the dock saying: "I have fought against White domination, and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

And Nelson Mandela lived for that ideal, and he made it real. He achieved more than could be expected of any man. And today he has gone home. And we have lost one of the most influential, courageous, and profoundly good human beings that any of us will share time with on this Earth. He no longer belongs to us, he belongs to the ages.

Through his fierce dignity and unbending will to sacrifice his own freedom for the freedom of others, Madiba transformed South Africa and moved all of us. His journey from a prisoner to a President embodied the promise that human beings and countries can change for the better. His commitment to transfer power and reconcile with those who jailed him set an example that all humanity should aspire to, whether in the lives of nations or our own personal lives. And the fact that he did it all with grace and good humor and an ability to acknowledge his own imperfections only makes the man that much more remarkable. As he once said, "I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying."

I am one of the countless millions who drew inspiration from Nelson Mandela's life. My very first political action—the first thing I ever did that involved an issue or a policy or politics—was a protest against apartheid. I would

study his words and his writings. The day he was released from prison gave me a sense of what human beings can do when they're guided by their hopes and not by their fears. And like so many around the globe, I cannot fully imagine my own life without the example that Nelson Mandela set, and so long as I live, I will do what I can to learn from him.

To Graça Machel and his family, Michelle and I extend our deepest sympathy and gratitude for sharing this extraordinary man with us. His life's work meant long days away from those who loved him most. And I only hope that the time spent with him these last few weeks brought peace and comfort to his family.

To the people of South Africa, we draw strength from the example of renewal and reconciliation and resilience that you made real. A free South Africa at peace with itself, that's an example to the world, and that's Madiba's legacy to the nation that he loved.

We will not likely see the likes of Nelson Mandela again. So it falls to us, as best we can, to forward the example that he set: to make decisions guided not by hate, but by love; to never discount the difference that one person can make; to strive for a future that is worthy of his sacrifice.

For now, let us pause and give thanks for the fact that Nelson Mandela lived: a man who took history in his hands and bent the arc of the moral universe towards justice. May God bless his memory and keep him in peace.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Graça Machel, wife of former President Mandela.

Remarks at a Hanukkah Reception
December 5, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House. Now, normally, we just have one Hanukkah reception, but this year, we are hosting two, because we have so many friends to celebrate with, we had to do it twice. And I'll be welcoming a whole other group this evening. Don't tell them, though, but you're my favorite group. [*Laughter*] It is our own little Hanukkah miracle. The party that was supposed to last only 1 hour will go on for 8. [*Laughter*] You got that one? [*Laughter*]

Now, this is the fifth time I've celebrated Hanukkah as President. But this is my first "Thanikkah." Did I say that right?

Audience member. Thanksgivukkah.

The President. This intersection of two wonderful holidays has inspired a whole lot of people across America; we are delighted to welcome a few of them here tonight.

We've got 10-year-old Asher Weintraub from New York City—where's Asher? Asher came up with what we believe is the world's first-ever menorah shaped like a turkey. It is called the "menurkey." [*Laughter*] Where is the menurkey? I had it just a second ago.

The First Lady. Wait. You just had it. Where is the menurkey?

The President. We've got to bring in the menurkey out here. I'll continue speaking. You've got to see this. Thank you, Asher, for your spirit and your creativity.

We've got Dana Gitell. Where's Dana, who actually coined the term "Thanksgivukkah." Her sister Deborah—oh, here's the menurkey.

Audience member. Team Thanksgivukkah is here!

The President. There we go. [*Laughter*] So I'm going to keep this in a special place.

So Dana, along with her sister Deborah, expect this term to catch on around the country. Where are they?

Hebrew SeniorLife Marketing Specialist Dana Reichman Gitell. Right here.

The President. There they are. Let's see them. Hey, guys. How are you? They've had a lot of fun with their project. But there is a serious side to it, because they've said they always express their gratitude to America, a place where no matter who you are, you can always celebrate your faith. And that same spirit is re-

flected in the menorah that we're about to light.

It was designed by Manfred Anson, who was born in Germany in 1922. And as a child, he lived through the horrors of Kristallnacht and later lost a brother to the Holocaust. But Manfred escaped, and like the Maccabees at the center of the Hanukkah story, he fought against tyranny, serving in the Australian army during World War II. And like the Maccabees, after the war was over, he sought a place where he could live his life and practice his religion free from fear. So for Manfred and millions like him, that place was ultimately America.

And Manfred passed away last year, but during his life, he designed this special menorah, with a model of the Statue of Liberty at the base of each candle. I don't know if you've noticed that. In a few moments, all nine Lady Liberties will be shining: a reminder that our country endures as a beacon of hope and of freedom wherever you come from, whatever your faith.

And that beacon stays bright because of families like the ones that will join me in lighting the menorah this evening: the Schmitters. Now, dad, Jake, could not be here because he's deployed in Afghanistan. But we are joined by his wonderful wife Drew, his daughters Lainey and Kylie—go ahead and wave, guys. [*Laughter*] So, Drew, Lainey, Kylie, I want you to know how proud we are of not only your dad, but also of you. And we're so grateful for the sacrifices that you make on behalf of our country every single day.

And tonight we give thanks to all the men and women in uniform and for their families. They make tremendous sacrifices on our behalf, on behalf of our freedom and our security: not only of us, but our allies and friends around the world, including our friends in the State of Israel. And the commitment and the courage of our men and women in uniform and their families is itself a miracle for which we give thanks.

As the Festival of Lights draws to a close, let's take one last chance to think about all the miracles we've been lucky enough to experience in our own lives. There are small miracles, like the invention of the menurkey. [*Laughter*] And then there are big miracles, like the chance to be a part of this great country.

The first day of Hanukkah and Thanksgiving won't overlap again for more than 70,000 years. So it's safe to say that this was a once-in-a-lifetime event—[*laughter*]—unless there's a—really a scientific breakthrough that we don't know about. But while we never may see again another Thanksgivukkah, I know that if we can show the same resilience as Manfred Anson and the same resourcefulness as young Asher, as well as Dana and Deborah, and the same strength as military families like the Schmitters, we will be blessed with many more miracles for years to come.

So thank you, everybody. Happy Hanukkah. And now I want to welcome Rabbi Amanda Lurer, a lieutenant in our Navy, to say a blessing.

Rabbi Amanda Lurer. Hanukkah formally ends tonight as the Sun goes down this evening. But it will always be appropriate for us as we gather to remind ourselves and the world of the meaning of this holiday. So in that spirit, in this wonderful gathering, we now kindle the menorah and recite two blessings. And as we kindle the lights, we'll say—the first one is the *she-asa nissim* blessing, thanking God for the miraculous capability to bring light to the darkest corners of the world and for leaders who are dedicated to strengthening religious freedoms in our days as in the day of the Maccabees.

The second blessing is *shehecheyanu*, that simple yet powerful prayer of thanksgiving, for the blessing of life, the gift of light and the privilege to celebrate Hanukkah together. Please join me.

[*At this point, a Hebrew prayer was sung. A second prayer was then recited.*]

The President. All right.

[*The menorah was lit.*]

The President. Well, thank you all again for being here. We hope you have a wonderful

celebration. And we can't stay to party because I've got to go back to work. [*Laughter*] But I do want to make sure that we get a chance to shake hands with all of you briefly as we go by. And again, we just want to thank the Schmitters and make sure to tell dad we're proud of him too.

Military spouse Drew Schmitter. Okay.

The President. Okay. Thank you. Enjoy, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:31 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deborah Gitell, vice president of client strategy, Awestruck Marketing Group.

Remarks at a Hanukkah Reception
December 5, 2013

The President. Good evening, everybody. Welcome to the White House, and happy Hanukkah. I should say that normally we just have one Hanukkah reception, but this year, we're hosting two. We have so many friends to celebrate with, we had to do it twice. I welcomed a whole other group this afternoon. But I want you—don't tell them, this is actually my favorite group right here. [*Laughter*] It's our own little Hanukkah miracle: The party was only last—supposed to last for 1 hour, and it's lasted for 8. [*Laughter*]

I want to welcome so many friends and leaders from throughout the Jewish community. We are honored to be joined by one-third of our Supreme Court: Justice Ginsburg; Justice Kagan, who is here somewhere—there she is; and Justice Breyer is here. We've got some outstanding Members of Congress, members of my administration with us, including our new Director of Jewish Outreach, Matt Nosanchuk. Where's Matt? Matt's out here somewhere.

I also want to welcome representatives from the State of Israel who are joining us. I—some of you recall, I had just an extraordinary, magical visit to Israel earlier this year and was proud to reaffirm the alliance between our two great democracies. I also had the opportunity to go to an expo where I saw the best of Israeli technology. And there's been such a burst of innovation and creativity that's taking place, including, by the way, I saw a robot that served me *matzah*. [*Laughter*] We were thinking about having that robot here to serve *latkes*, but we couldn't get him—[*laughter*]—so maybe next year.

Obviously, on a note of seriousness, our—tonight our thoughts and prayers are with the Mandela family in South Africa. They're grieving the loss of a man, a moral giant who embodied the dignity and the courage and the hope and sought to bring about justice not only in South Africa, but, I think, to inspire millions around the world. And he did that: the idea that every single human being ought to be free and that oppression can end and justice can prevail.

Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Yes.

The President. That's what—[*applause*]. That was a Supreme Court Justice who said, "Yes." [*Laughter*] So I—that's what Nelson Mandela taught us, and it's that same spirit that brings us here tonight.

And over the last 8 days, Jews around the world have gathered with friends and family to light the menorah and retell the story that has been kept alive for more than 2,000 years. And it's a story of miracles, of a light that burned for 8 days when it should have only lasted for 1 and a people who surmounted overwhelming odds to reclaim their historic homeland so they could live their lives in peace and practice their religion in peace.

It's a story that has been repeated countless times throughout Jewish history. And as we light the candles tonight, we're reminded that we're still writing new chapters in that story today. In 1922, Abraham and Hayyah Ettinger donated this menorah to their congregation in a small town that's now the Czech Republic. And tragically, the Ettingers—and their prayer hall—were lost in the Holocaust.

Yet even in the face of tragedy, Jewish communities around the world kept alive a light that would not be extinguished: the hope that freedom would triumph over tyranny. And tonight we're honored that the menorah that once belonged to the Ettingers will be lit by two Holocaust survivors from the former Czechoslovakia: Margit Meissner and Martin Weiss. The triumph they represent and the triumph this menorah represents, the progress that it represents, the notion that we can join together here tonight reminds us that we can never take our blessings for granted and that we always need to keep working for peace and the freedom that we seek.

And that's why we continue to stand up for our values around the world. That's why we stand alongside and partner with those allies who share those values, including the State of Israel. Together with our Israeli friends, we're determined to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And we're testing whether it's possible through diplomacy to achieve that goal, understanding that we have to remain vigilant.

For the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress of Iran's nuclear program. And key parts of the program will be rolled back, even though the toughest of our sanctions remain in place. And that's good for the world, and that's good for Israel. Over the coming months, we're going to continue our diplomacy, with the goal of achieving a comprehensive solution that deals with the threat of Iran's nuclear weapons once and for all. And through it all, as always, our commitment to Israel and its security will remain iron clad and unshakeable.

Now, building a future of security and peace is not easy. But the story of Hanukkah, of survivors like Margit and Martin—leaders like Nelson Mandela—remind us that those who came before us overcame even greater obstacles than those that we face. So let's take strength from their struggles and from their sacrifice. Let's give thanks for miracles, large and small. Let's recommit ourselves to building a future that shines with hope and freedom and peace. I want to thank all of you for the contributions you've made to communities across the country and the many friends who have been so supportive to Michelle and myself during these years.

And with that, I want to welcome Rabbi Joshua Sherwin, a lieutenant in the United States Navy, to say a blessing.

Rabbi Joshua Sherwin. Thank you, Mr. President. As Hanukkah formally ends this evening, it is appropriate for us to gather to remind ourselves and the world the true meaning of this holiday. In that spirit, at this wonderful gathering, we now kindle the menorah and recite two blessings as we kindle these lights: the *she-asa nissim*, thanking God for the miraculous capability to bring light to the darkest corners of the world and for the leaders who are dedicated to strengthening religious freedom in our days just as the Maccabees did in ancient ones.

The second *bracha*: We'll all join together in the *shehecheyanu*, the simple yet powerful prayer of thanks giving for the blessing of life, for the gift of light, and for the privilege of celebrating this Hanukkah together. I invite you to join me.

[*At this point, a Hebrew prayer was sung. A second prayer was then recited, and the menorah was lit. A final blessing was sung. Music then began to play.*]

The President. They came in a little late, but that's okay. [*Laughter*] There is only one last piece of business that I need to do. This was prepared for us. Some of you may be aware that Thanksgiving and the first day of Hanukkah converge only every 70,000 years. [*Laughter*] So presumably, this is the first and the last time that this may be used. [*Laughter*] This was prepared for us. This is called a "menurkey." [*Laughter*]

And I just wanted to make sure that those of you who were not familiar with the menurkey—[*laughter*]—that we had our own here in the White House. [*Laughter*] Enjoy the reception, everybody. Thank you so much. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa, who died on December 5; and Bethesda, MD, residents Margit Meissner and Martin Weiss.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree
December 6, 2013

Merry Christmas, everybody! Well, this show is always a great way to get in the holiday spirit. Every year, I rehearse my own little act, just in case. But it seems like, yet again, they couldn't find space to squeeze me into the program. [*Laughter*] You are lucky I'm not singing.

First of all, let me thank Secretary Jewell and welcome her to her first Christmas tree lighting. She is doing a great job for our national parks. She used to run one of America's biggest outdoor recreation companies, and now she's charged with protecting the great outdoors for all of us. So we appreciate her, and we want to thank Neil Mulholland and the whole National Park Foundation and National Park Service team for helping to put this beautiful production together.

Let's also give it up for Jane Lynch and all the great performers who are doing an incredible job putting us in a festive mood tonight. And to all Americans who are here today and watching at home, we are so glad to be part of this wonderful holiday tradition.

For 91 years, the national Christmas tree has stood as a beacon of light and of promise during the holiday season. During times of peace and prosperity, challenge and change, Americans have gathered around our national tree to kick off the holiday season and give thanks for everything that makes this time of year so magical: spending time with friends and family and spreading tidings of peace and good will here at home and around the world.

And this year, we give a special measure of gratitude for Nelson Mandela, a man who championed that generosity of spirit. In his life, he blessed us with tremendous grace and unbelievable courage. And we are all privileged to live in a world touched by his goodness.

Each Christmas, we celebrate the birth of a child who came into the world with only a stable's roof to shelter Him. But through a life of humility and the ultimate sacrifice, a life guided by faith and kindness towards others, Christ assumed a mighty voice, teaching us lessons of compassion and charity that have lasted more than two millennia. He ministered to the poor. He embraced the outcast. He healed the sick. And in Him we see a living example of scripture that we ought to love others not only through our words, but also through our deeds.

It's a message both timeless and universal: No matter what god you pray to or if you pray to none at all, we all have a responsibility to ourselves and to each other to make a difference that is real and lasting. We are our brother's keeper. We are our sister's keeper.

And so in this season of generosity, let's reach out to those who need help the most. In this season of reflection, let's make sure that our incredibly brave servicemembers and their families know how much we appreciate their sacrifice. And there are several military families and service men and women here tonight. We are so grateful to you for all that you do.

In this season of hope, let us come together as one people, one family, to ensure that we're doing everything we can to keep America the land of endless opportunity and boundless optimism for which we're so thankful.

So on behalf of Malia, Sasha, Marian, the First Lady Michelle, plus Bo and Sunny, I want to wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a joyful holiday season. God bless you. God bless our troops. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:16 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Neil J. Mulholland, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; actor Jane Lynch; and former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa, who died on December 5. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

The President's Weekly Address
December 7, 2013

Hi, everybody. The holiday season is a time for remembering the bonds we share and our obligations to one another as human beings. But right now more than 1 million of our fellow Americans are poised to lose a vital economic lifeline just a few days after Christmas if Congress doesn't do something about it.

Our top priority as a country should be restoring opportunity and broad-based economic growth for all Americans. And yesterday we learned that our businesses created about 200,000 jobs in the month of November. That's more than 8 million new jobs in the last 45 months. And the unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in 5 years.

But we need to do everything we can to help businesses create more good jobs that pay good wages, even faster. Because the hole that we're still digging out of means that there are still millions of Americans looking for work, often because they've been laid off through no fault of their own.

We also have to look out for the Americans working hard to get those jobs. That's why, as a country, we offer temporary unemployment insurance so that job seekers don't fall into poverty and so that when they get that job, they can bounce back more quickly.

For many families, it can be the difference between hardship and catastrophe. It makes a difference for a mother who suddenly doesn't know if she'll be able to put food on the table for her kids. It makes a difference for a father who lost his job and is looking for a new one. Last year alone, it lifted 2.5 million people out of poverty and cushioned the blow for many more.

But here's the thing: If Members of Congress don't act before they leave on their vacations, 1.3 million Americans will lose this lifeline. These are people we know. They're our friends and neighbors; they sit next to us in church and volunteer in our communities; their kids play with our kids. And they include 20,000 veterans who have served this country with honor.

If Congress refuses to act, it won't just hurt families already struggling, it will actually harm our economy. Unemployment insurance is one of the most effective ways there is to boost our economy. When people have money to spend on basic necessities, that means more customers for our businesses and ultimately more jobs. And the evidence shows that unemployment insurance doesn't stop people from trying hard to find work.

Just this week, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicted that allowing benefits to expire will be a drag on our economic growth next year. A report by the Department of Labor and my Council of Economic Advisers estimated that it could cost businesses 240,000 jobs. And without the ability to feed their families or pay the bills, many people currently looking for work could stop looking for good.

So extending unemployment insurance isn't just the right thing to do for our families, it's the smart thing to do for our economy. And it shouldn't be a partisan issue. For decades, Congress has voted to offer relief to job seekers, including when the unemployment rate was lower than it is today. But now that economic lifeline is in jeopardy, all because Republicans in this Congress—which is on track to be the most unproductive in history—have so far refused to extend it.

So this holiday season, let's give our fellow Americans who are desperately looking for work the help they need to keep on looking. Let's make it easier for businesses to attract more customers and our economy to grow. And together, let's keep doing everything we can to make this country a place where anyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:55 p.m. on December 6 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 7.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Saban Forum
December 7, 2013

The President. Hello!

Saban Capital Group Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Haim Saban. How are you doing?

The President. I'm good. Hello, everybody.

Mr. Saban. Good. One of your staffers said you are in a great mood this afternoon, so——

The President. I am.

Mr. Saban. ——we're doubly blessed here. So that's terrific.

I'd like to thank you very much for being here today, Mr. President. The Forum, on its 10th anniversary, is honored to have you join us in this conversation. And I am personally honored that you insisted that I have this conversation with you, even though I never set foot for any conversation for 10 years. [*Laughter*] So thank you. I'm very honored.

Shall we start with Iran?

The President. We should.

Iran

Mr. Saban. Okay, good. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, polls indicate that 77 percent of Israelis don't believe this first nuclear deal will preclude Iran from having nuclear weapons, and they perceive this fact as an existential matter for them. What can you say to the Israeli people to address their concern?

The President. Well, first, before I answer the question, let me say to you, Haim, thank you so much for the great work that you've done. I think the Saban Forum and the Saban Center has done outstanding work, and it provides us a mechanism where we don't just scratch the surface of these issues. Obviously, the challenges in the Middle East are enormous, and the work that's being done here is terrific.

So I want to also thank Strobe for hosting us here today and all of you who are here, including some outstanding members of the Israeli Government and some friends that I haven't seen in a while. So thanks for having me.

Let me start with the basic premise that I've said repeatedly. It is in America's national security interests, not just Israel's national security interests or the region's national security interests, to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

And let's remember where we were when I first came into office. Iran had gone from having less than 200 centrifuges to having thousands of centrifuges, in some cases more advanced centrifuges. There was a program that had advanced to the point where their breakout capacity had accelerated in ways that we had been concerned about for quite some time, and as a consequence, what I said to my team and what I said to our international partners was that we are going to have to be much more serious about how we change the cost-benefit analysis for Iran.

We put in place an unprecedented regime of sanctions that has crippled Iran's economy, cut their oil revenues by more than half, have put enormous pressure on their currency; their economy contracted by more than 5 percent last year. And it is precisely because of the international sanctions and the coalition that we were able to build internationally that the Iranian people responded by saying, we need a new direction in how we interact with the international community and how we deal with this sanctions regime. And that's what brought President Rouhani to power. He was not necessarily the first choice of the hardliners inside of Iran.

Now, that doesn't mean that we should trust him or anybody else inside of Iran. This is a regime that came to power swearing opposition to the United States, to Israel, and to many of the values that we hold dear. But what I've consistently said is, even as I don't take any options off the table, what we do have to test is the possibility that we can resolve this issue diplomatically. And that is the deal that, at the first stages, we have been able to get done in Geneva, thanks to some extraordinary work by

John Kerry and his counterparts in the P–5-plus-1.

So let's look at exactly what we've done. For the first time in over a decade, we have halted advances in the Iranian nuclear program. We have not only made sure that in Fordo and Natanz that they have to stop adding additional centrifuges, we've also said that they've got to roll back their 20-percent advanced enrichment. So we're——

Mr. Saban. To how much?

The President. Down to zero. So you remember when Prime Minister Netanyahu made his presentation before the United Nations last year——

Mr. Saban. The cartoon with the red line?

The President. Well, the picture of a bomb. He was referring to 20-percent enrichment, which the concern was if you get too much of that, you now have sufficient capacity to go ahead and create a nuclear weapon. We're taking that down to zero. We are stopping the advancement of the Arak facility, which would provide an additional pathway, a plutonium pathway, for the development of nuclear weapons.

We are going to have daily inspectors in Fordo and Natanz. We're going to have additional inspections in Arak. And as a consequence, during this 6-month period, Iran cannot and will not advance its program or add additional stockpiles of advanced uranium—enriched uranium.

Now, what we've done in exchange is kept all these sanctions in place; the architecture remains with respect to oil, with respect to finance, with respect to banking. What we've done is, we've turned the spigot slightly, and we've said, here's maximum $7 billion out of the over a hundred billion dollars of revenue of theirs that is frozen as a consequence of our sanctions, to give us the time and the space to test whether they can move in a direction, a comprehensive, permanent agreement that would give us all assurances that they're not producing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Saban. I understand. A quick question as it relates to the $7 billion, if I may.

The President. Please.

Mr. Saban. How do we prevent those who work with us in Geneva, who are already descended on Tehran looking for deals, to cause the 7 to become 70?

The President. Well, I——

Mr. Saban. Because we can control what we do, but what is the extent that we can control the others?

The President. Well, Haim, this is precisely why the timing of this was right. One of the things we were always concerned about was that if we did not show good faith in trying to resolve this issue diplomatically, then the sanctions regime would begin to fray.

Keep in mind that this was 2 years of extraordinary diplomatic work on behalf of our team to actually get the sanctions in place. They're not just the unilateral sanctions that are created by the United States. These are sanctions that are also participated in by Russia, by China, and some allies of ours like South Korea and Japan that find these sanctions very costly. But that's precisely why they've become so effective.

And so what we've said is that we do not loosen any of the core sanctions; we provide a small window through which they can access some revenue, but we can control it, and it is reversible. And during the course of these 6 months, if and when Iran shows itself not to be abiding by this agreement, not to be negotiating in good faith, we can reverse them and tighten them even further.

But here is the bottom line. Ultimately, my goal as President of the United States—something that I've said publicly and privately and shared everywhere I've gone—is to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. But what I've also said is, the best way for us to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapons is for a comprehensive, verifiable, diplomatic resolution, without taking any other options off the table if we fail to achieve that.

It is important for us to test that proposition during the next 6 months, understanding that while we're talking, they're not secretly improving their position or changing circumstances on the ground inside of Iran. And if at the end of 6 months, it turns out that we can't

make a deal, we're no worse off, and in fact, we have greater leverage with the international community to continue to apply sanctions and even strengthen them.

Mr. Saban. Good.

The President. If, on the other hand, we're able to get this deal done, then what we can achieve through a diplomatic resolution of this situation is, frankly, greater than what we could achieve with the other options that are available to us.

Mr. Saban. Let's all hope we get there.

The President. Absolutely.

Nuclear Proliferation/Iran

Mr. Saban. You have hosted Passover dinners at the White House.

The President. I have.

Mr. Saban. And you know this famous saying, "Why is this night different than any other night?" In that context, I would like to ask you a question.

The President. Please.

Mr. Saban. With best intentions and all efforts, President Reagan vowed that Pakistan would not go nuclear. Didn't happen. With best intentions and all efforts, President Clinton vowed that North Korea—who are—won't go nuclear. Why is this nuclear deal different than any other nuclear deal? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, we don't know yet. No, we don't know yet. I think it's important for everybody to understand, this is hard. Because the technology of the nuclear cycle, you can get off the Internet; the knowledge of creating a nuclear weapon is already out there. And Iran is a large country, and it is a relatively wealthy country, and so we have to take seriously the possibility that they are going to try to get a nuclear weapon. That's what this whole exercise is about.

Having said that, if you look at the history, by the time we got an agreement with North Korea, they essentially already had a nuclear weapon. With respect to Pakistan, there was never the kinds of inspection regimes and international sanctions and U.N. resolutions that were in place. We have been able to craft an international effort and verification mechanism around the Iran nuclear program that is unprecedented and unique. That doesn't mean it's easy. And that's why we have to take it seriously.

But I think one of the things that I've repeatedly said when people ask, why should we try to negotiate with them, we can't trust them, we're being naive, what I try to describe to them is not the choice between this deal and the ideal, but the choice between this deal and other alternatives.

I mean, if I had an option, if we could create an option in which Iran eliminated every single nut and bolt of their nuclear program and foreswore the possibility of ever having a nuclear program and, for that matter, got rid of all its military capabilities, I would take it. But——

Mr. Saban. Next question——

The President. But—sorry, Haim, I want to make sure everybody understands it—that particular option is not available. And so as a consequence, what we have to do is to make a decision as to, given the options available, what is the best way for us to assure that Iran does not get a nuclear weapon.

And the best way for us to assure it is to test this diplomatic path, understanding that it's not based on trust, it's based on what we can verify. And it also, by the way, does not negate the fact that Iran is engaging in a whole bunch of other behavior in the Middle East and around the world that is detrimental to the United States and detrimental to Israel.

And we will continue to contest their efforts where they're engaging in terrorism, where they're being disruptive to our friends and our allies. We will not abide by any threats to our friends and allies in the region, and we've made that perfectly clear. And our commitment to Israel's security is sacrosanct, and they understand that. They don't have any doubt about that.

But if we can negotiate on the nuclear program in the same way that Ronald Reagan was able to negotiate with the Soviet Union, even as we were still contesting them around the world, that removes one more threat—and a critical, existential threat—takes it out of their arsenal. And it allows us then to ultimately, I

think, win them—defeat some of their agenda throughout the region without worrying that somehow it's going to escalate or trigger a nuclear arms race in the most volatile part of the world.

Israel/Iran

Mr. Saban. Unfortunately, you're right: It would. So Tom Friedman had an interesting perspective in one of his columns. He said: "Never negotiate with Iran without some leverage and some crazy on your side. We have to outcrazy the crazies." Do you think he has a point? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, the—Tom is a very smart observer. And I know that my friend, Bibi, is going to be speaking later, and if Tom wants to characterize Bibi the way you just described, that's his——

Mr. Saban. I didn't say that.

The President. ——that's his prerogative, that's not my view. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Netanyahu and I have had constant consultations on these issues throughout the last 5 years. And something that I think bears repeating: The United States military cooperation with Israel has never been stronger. Our intelligence cooperation with Israel has never been stronger. Our support of Israel's security has never been stronger. Whether you're talking about Iron Dome, whether you're talking about trying to manage the situation in Gaza a little over a year ago, across the board, our coordination on the concrete issues facing Israel's security has never been stronger. And that's not just my opinion, I think that's something that can be verified.

There are times where I, as President of the United States, am going to have different tactical perspectives than the Prime Minister of Israel, and that is understandable, because Israel cannot contract out its security. In light of the history that the people of Israel understand all too well, they have to make sure that they are making their own assessments about what they need to do to protect themselves. And we respect that. And I have said that consistently to the Prime Minister.

But ultimately, it is my view, from a tactical perspective, that we have to test out this proposition. It will make us stronger internationally, and it may possibly lead to a deal that—we'll have to show to the world—in fact assures us that Iran is not getting a nuclear weapon.

It's not as if there's going to be a lot of capacity to hide the ball here. We're going to be able to make an assessment, because this will be subject to the P–5-plus-1 and the international community looking at the details of every aspect of a potential final deal, and we're consulting with all our friends, including Israel, in terms of what would that end state look like. And if we can't get there, then no deal is better than a bad deal. But presuming that it's going to be a bad deal and, as a consequence, not even trying for a deal, I think, would be a dire mistake.

Mr. Saban. Well, personally, I find a lot of comfort in the fact that even though the United States and Israel may have red lines in different places, we are on the same place as far as the bottom line goes——

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Saban. ——and Iran will not have nuclear weapons. Fair to say?

The President. Absolutely. That is more than fair.

Mr. Saban. Good. Thank you. Should we move to the Israeli-Palestinian situation?

The President. We should.

Mr. Saban. Okay. [*Laughter*] Very obedient President I have here today. [*Laughter*]

The President. You—this is the Saban Forum, so you're in charge. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Saban. I wish. [*Laughter*]

The President. Or Cheryl is in charge.

Mr. Saban. You're more on now, Mr. President.

The President. That's exactly right.

Mr. Saban. It is Cheryl who is in charge.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Mr. Saban. Anyway. [*Laughter*] First of all, before I ask the first question, I would be remiss if I didn't, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your continuous effort to achieve

peace in the Middle East. Thank you so very much.

The President. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Saban. So people talk about an imposed American solution. We've heard these rumors rumbling around for a while. The U.S. has always said it doesn't want to impose. What would you propose?

The President. Well, first of all, this is a challenge that we've been wrestling with for 60 years. And what I've consistently said is that the only way this is going to be resolved is if the people of Israel and the Palestinian people make a determination that their futures and the futures of their children and grandchildren will be better off with peace than with conflict. The United States can be an effective facilitator of that negotiation and dialogue; we can help to bridge differences and bridge gaps. But both sides want—have to want to get there.

And I have to commend Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas for the courageous efforts that have led to very serious conversations over the last several months. They are not easy. But they come down to what we all know are going to be the core issues: territory, security, refugees, Jerusalem.

And there are not a lot of secrets or surprises at this point. We know what the outlines of a potential agreement might look like. And the question then becomes, are both sides willing to take the very tough political risks involved if their bottom lines are met?

For the Palestinians, the bottom line is that they have a state of their own that is real and meaningful. For the Israelis, the bottom line is, to a large extent, is the State of Israel as a Jewish state secure? And those issues have been spoken about over the last several months in these negotiations in a very serious way. And I know Tzipi Livni is here and has been participating in that, and we're very grateful for her efforts there.

And I think it is possible, over the next several months, to arrive at a framework that does not address every single detail, but gets us to a point where everybody recognizes, better to move forward than move backwards. Sometimes, when you're climbing up a mountain, even when it's scary, you—it's actually easier to go up than it is to go down. And I think that we're now at a place where we can achieve a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security. But it's going to require some very tough decisions.

One thing I have to say, though, is, we have spent a lot of time working with Prime Minister Netanyahu and his entire team to understand from an Israeli perspective what is required for the security of Israel in such a scenario. And we—going back to what I said earlier—we understand that we can't dictate to Israel what it needs for its security. But what we have done is to try to understand it and then see through a consultative process, are there ways that, through technology, through additional ideas, we can potentially provide for that.

And I assigned one of our top former generals, John Allen, who used to—most recently headed up the entire coalition effort in Afghanistan. He's retired now, but he was willing to take on this mission, and he's been working to examine the entire set of challenges around security. If——

Mr. Saban. Has he concluded anything?

The President. Well, he's come up to—he has arrived at the conclusion that it is possible to create a two-state solution that preserves Israel's core security needs.

Now, that's his conclusion, but ultimately, he's not the decisionmaker here. Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli military and intelligence folks have to make that determination. And ultimately, the Palestinians have to also recognize that there is going to be a transition period where the Israeli people cannot expect a replica of Gaza in the West Bank. That is unacceptable. And I think we believe that we can arrive at that point where Israel was confident about that, but we're going to have to see whether the Israelis agree and whether President Abbas, then, is willing to understand that this transition period requires some restraint on the part of the Palestinians as well. They don't get everything that they want on day one.

And that creates some political problems for President Abbas, as well.

Mr. Saban. Yes. Well, I'll save my next question of what was the reaction of the Prime Minister to General Allen for John Kerry.

The President. Yes, ask John Kerry or ask the Prime Minister.

Mr. Saban. Okay.

The President. I don't want to speak for him. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Saban. They won't tell me, but okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's probably true.

Palestinian Territories/Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Mr. Saban. My last question.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Saban. The Palestinians are two people: one in the West Bank, led by President Abbas, that is negotiating the deal; and one in Gaza, led by Hamas, that wants to eradicate Israel from the face of the Earth. President Abbas, as far as I know, says he won't make a deal that doesn't include Gaza, which he doesn't control. How do we get out from this labyrinth?

The President. Well, I think this is going to have to happen in stages. But here's what I know from my visits to Israel, my visits to the West Bank: There are people of good will on both sides that recognize the status quo is not sustainable over the long term, and as a consequence, it is in the interests of both the Israelis and Palestinians to resolve this issue.

There are young people, teenagers that I met both in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories that want to get out from under this history and seek a future that is fundamentally different for them. And so if in fact we can create a pathway to peace, even if initially it's restricted to the West Bank, if there is a model where young Palestinians in Gaza are looking and seeing that in the West Bank, Palestinians are able to live in dignity with self-determination, and suddenly, their economy is booming and trade is taking place because they have created an environment in which Israel is confident about its security and a lot of the old barriers to commerce and educational exchange and all that has begun to break down, that's something that the young people of Gaza are going to want. And the pressure that will be placed for the residents of Gaza to experience that same future is something that is going to be, I think, overwhelmingly appealing.

But that is probably going to take place during the course of some sort of transition period. And the security requirements that Israel requires will have to be met. And I think that is able—that we can accomplish that, but ultimately, it's going to be something that requires everybody to stretch out of their comfort zones.

And I do—the one thing I will say to the people of Israel is that you can be assured, whoever is in the office I currently occupy, Democrat or Republican, that your security will be uppermost on our minds. That will not change. And that should not mean you let up on your vigilance in terms of wanting to look out for your own country. It does—it should give you some comfort, though, that you have the most powerful nation on Earth as your closest friend and ally. And that commitment is going to be undiminished.

Q. That was my last question.

The President. I promised—we worked something backstage where as long as Haim's questions weren't too long, I'd take a couple of questions from the audience. And he was very disciplined—[*laughter*]—so let me take one or two.

This gentleman right here.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Well, why don't you get a microphone so everybody can hear you?

Iran

Q. My name is Amos Yadlin. I used to be a general in the Israeli Air Force, in intelligence, and now running a think tank in Tel Aviv. Looking into the future agreement with Iran, I put behind me the initial agreement——

The President. Right.

Q. ——and what is really important is the final agreement. Two questions. What is the parameters that you are—see as a red line to ensure that Iran will be moving forward—moving

backward, rolling back from the bomb as much as possible? And what is your plan B if an agreement cannot be reached?

The President. Well, the—with respect to the end state, I want to be very clear: There's nothing in this agreement or document that grants Iran a right to enrich. We've been very clear that given its past behavior and given existing U.N. resolutions and previous violations by Iran of its international obligations, that we don't recognize such a right, and if by the way, negotiations break down, there will be no additional international recognition that's been obtained, this deal goes away, and we're back to where we were before the Geneva agreement, subject—and then Iran will continue to be subject to all the sanctions that we've been putting—we put in place in the past, and we may seek additional ones.

But I think what we have said is, we can envision a comprehensive agreement that involves extraordinary constraints and verification mechanisms and intrusive inspections, but that permits Iran to have a peaceful nuclear program.

Now, in terms of specifics, we know that they don't need to have a underground, fortified facility like Fordo in order to have a peaceful nuclear program. They certainly don't need a heavy water reactor at Arak in order to have a peaceful nuclear program. They don't need some of the advanced centrifuges that they currently possess in order to have a limited, peaceful nuclear program.

And so the question ultimately is going to be, are they prepared to roll back some of the advancements that they've made that would not justify—or could not be justified by simply wanting some modest, peaceful nuclear power, but frankly, hint at a desire to have breakout capacity and go right to the edge of breakout capacity. And if we can move that significantly back, then that is, I think, a net win.

Now, you'll hear arguments, including potentially from the Prime Minister, that says we can't accept any enrichment on Iranian soil. Period. Full stop. End of conversation. And this takes me back to the point I made earlier. One can envision an ideal world in which Iran said, we'll destroy every element and facility and you name it, it's all gone. I can envision a world in which Congress passed every one of my bills that I put forward. [*Laughter*] I mean, there are a lot of things that I can envision that would be wonderful. [*Laughter*] But precisely because we don't trust the nature of the Iranian regime, I think that we have to be more realistic and ask ourselves, what puts us in a strong position to assure ourselves that Iran is not having a nuclear weapon and that we are protected? What is required to accomplish that, and how does that compare to other options that we might take?

And it is my strong belief that we can envision a end state that gives us an assurance that even if they have some modest enrichment capability, it is so constrained and the inspections are so intrusive that they, as a practical matter, do not have breakout capacity.

Theoretically, they might still have some. But frankly, theoretically, they will always have some, because, as I said, the technology here is available to any good physics student at pretty much any university around the world. And they have already gone through the cycle to the point where the knowledge, we're not going to be able to eliminate. But what we can do is eliminate the incentive for them to want to do this.

And with respect to what happens if this breaks down, I mean, I won't go into details. I will say that if we cannot get the kind of comprehensive end state that satisfies us and the world community and the P–5-plus-1, then the pressure that we've been applying on them and the options that I've made clear I can avail myself of, including a military option, is one that we would consider and prepare for. And we've always said that. So that does not change.

But, last point I'll make on this, when I hear people who criticize the Geneva deal say it's got to be all or nothing, I would just remind them, if it's nothing, if we did not even try for this next 6 months to do this, all the breakout capacity we're concerned about would accelerate during that 6 months. Arak would be further along. The advanced centrifuges would have been put in place. They'd be that much

closer to breakout capacity 6 months from now. And that's why I think it's important for us to try to test this proposition.

I'll take a couple more. Yes, sir. Right over here.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, Boaz Bismuth, Israeli journalist from Israel Hayom daily newspaper. Mr. President, I covered the negotiations with Iran—nuclear negotiations: Geneva 2009, Istanbul 2010. And I came back now from Geneva again, where you could see the big change was not only on Iran's side, but also on the P–5-plus-1 side, meaning they were very eager to get—to reach an agreement. Coming back from Geneva, we learned, and some of us had known before, the secret talks America had with Iran. And we know the concern you have on the Israeli security; we're very grateful. But how does it coincide with your secret negotiations Washington had with Tehran? Thank you.

The President. The truth is, is that, without going into the details, there weren't a lot of secret negotiations. Essentially, what happened—and we were very clear and transparent about this—is that from the time I took office, I said we would reach out to Iran and we would let them know we're prepared to open up a diplomatic channel. After Rouhani was elected, there was some acceleration leading up to the U.N. General Assembly. You'll recall that Rouhani was engaging in what was termed a charm offensive. I mean, he was going around talking to folks. And at that point, it made sense for us to see, all right, how serious are you potentially about having these conversations?

They did not get highly substantive in the first several meetings, but were much more exploring how much room, in fact, did they have to get something done. And then as soon as they began to get more technical, at that point, they converged with the P–5-plus-1 discussions.

I will say this: The fact of Rhouhani's election, it's been said that there's no difference between him and Ahmadi-nejad except that he's more charming. I think that understates the shift in politics that took place in this election. Obviously, Rouhani is part of the Iranian establishment, and I think we have to assume that his ideology is one that is hostile to the United States and to Israel. But what he also represents is the desire on the part of the Iranian people for a change of direction. And we should not underestimate or entirely dismiss a shift in how the Iranian people want to interact with the world.

There's a lot of change that's going to be taking place in the Middle East over the next decade. And wherever we see the impulses of a people to move away from conflict, violence, and towards diplomatic resolution of conflicts, we should be ready and prepared to engage them—understanding, though, that, ultimately, it's not what you say, it's what you do.

And we have to be vigilant about maintaining our security postures, not be naive about the dangers that an Iranian regime pose, fight them wherever they're engaging in terrorism or actions that are hostile to us or our allies. But we have to not constantly assume that it's not possible for Iran, like any country, to change over time. It may not be likely. If you asked me, what is the likelihood that we're able to arrive at the end state that I was just describing earlier, I wouldn't say that it's more than 50–50. But we have to try.

Last question. And I think it's—young lady right there.

Israel/Iran/International Diplomacy

Q. Mr. President, my name is Ilana Dayan, I'm a reporter for Israeli Channel 2. I have been listening to your analysis of the Iranian deal, and I can only imagine a different—a slightly different analysis given by our Prime Minister Netanyahu.

The President. I think that's probably a good bet. That's more than 50–50. [*Laughter*]

Q. Israelis are known for their understatement. [*Laughter*] And I try to imagine a conversation between you two. And he would ask you, Mr. President, I see this deal as a historic mistake—which he has already stated——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——and I think it's the worst deal the West could have gotten.

The President. Right.

Q. And you would have told him, Bibi, that's where you go wrong. What would you have told him? That's one thing. And then, perhaps to understand the essence of your conversation, he would ask you, Mr. President, is there one set of circumstances under which you will order your B–52s to strike in Iran? What would you tell him? [*Laughter*] Is there any set of circumstances in which you will order your fighter pilots to strike in Iran? What would you tell the Prime Minister?

The President. Well, the—let me make a couple of points. Number one, obviously, the conversations between me and the Prime Minister are for me and the Prime Minister, not for an audience like this. And I will say that Bibi and I have very candid conversations, and there are occasionally significant tactical disagreements, but there is a constancy in trying to reach the same goal. And in this case, that goal is to make sure that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon.

As President of the United States, I don't go around advertising the circumstances in which I order pilots to launch attacks. That, I think, would be bad practice. [*Laughter*] I also would say, though, that when the President of the United States says that he doesn't take any options off the table, that should be taken seriously. And I think I have a track record over the last 5 years that indicates that that should be taken seriously.

It's interesting, in the region, there was this interesting interpretation of what happened with respect to Syria. I said it's a problem for Syria to have chemical weapons that it uses on its own citizens. And when we had definitive proof that it had, I indicated my willingness potentially to take military action. The fact that we ultimately did not take military action in some quarters was interpreted as, ah, you see, the President is not willing to take military action, despite the fact that I think Mr. Qadhafi would have a different view of that, or Mr. bin Laden. But given—be that as it may, that was yesterday, what have you done for me lately? [*Laughter*]

But the point is that my preference was always to resolve the issue diplomatically. And it turns out, lo and behold, that Syria now is actually removing its chemical weapons that a few months ago it denied it even possessed and has provided a comprehensive list, and they have already begun taking these weapons out of Syria. And although that does not solve the tragic situation inside of Syria, it turns out that removing those chemical weapons will make us safer, and it will make Israel safer, and it will make the Syrian people safer, and it will make the region safer.

And so I do not see military action as an end in—unto itself. Military action is one tool that we have in a toolkit that includes diplomacy in achieving our goals, which is ultimately our security.

And I think if you want to summarize the difference, in some ways, between myself and the Prime Minister on the Geneva issue, I think what this comes down to is the perception, potentially, that if we just kept on turning up the pressure—new sanctions, more sanctions, more military threats, et cetera—that eventually, Iran would cave. And what I've tried to explain is two points. One is that the reason the sanctions have been so effective—because we set them up in a painstaking fashion—the reason they've been effective is because other countries had confidence that we were not imposing sanctions just for the sake of sanctions, but we were imposing sanctions for the sake of trying to actually get Iran to the table and resolve the issue. And if the perception internationally was that we were not in good faith trying to resolve the issue diplomatically, that, more than anything, would actually begin to fray the edges of the sanctions regime. That's point number one.

And point number two—I've already said this before—you have to compare the approach that we're taking now with the alternatives. The idea that Iran, given everything we know about their history, would just continue to get more and more nervous about more sanctions and military threats and ultimately just say, okay, we give in, I think does not reflect an honest understanding of the Iranian

people or the Iranian regime. And I say that—by the way, I'm not just talking about the hardliners inside of Iran. I think even the so-called moderates or reformers inside of Iran would not be able to simply say, we will cave and do exactly what the U.S. and the Israelis say.

They are going to have to have a path in which they feel that there is a dignified resolution to this issue. That's a political requirement of theirs, and that, I suspect, runs across the political spectrum. And so for us to present a door that serves our goals and our purposes, but also gives them the opportunity to, in a dignified fashion, reenter the international community and change the approach that they've taken—at least, on this narrow issue, but one that is of extraordinary importance to all of us—is an opportunity that we should grant them.

All right?

Well, thank you very much. I enjoyed this.

Mr. Saban. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. President. You've been very generous.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:13 p.m. at the Willard Washington D.C. hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Strobe Talbott, president, Brookings Institution; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Thomas L. Friedman, columnist, New York Times; Cheryl Saban, wife of Mr. Saban; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; Minister of Justice Tzipora Livni of Israel; Gen. John R. Allen, USMC (Ret.), in his capacity as U.S. Special Envoy on Security Issues in the Middle East; and former President Mahmud Ahmadinejad of Iran.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception
December 8, 2013

Well, good evening, everyone. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. This is truly one of our favorite nights of the year and not just because of everyone who visits the White House; this group also usually wins best dressed award. [*Laughter*] All of you look spectacular. I am a little disappointed that Carlos Santana wore one of his more conservative shirts this evening. [*Laughter*] Back in the day, you could see those things from space. [*Laughter*]

I want to start by thanking everyone who dedicates themselves to making the Kennedy Center such a wonderful place for the American people to experience the arts: David Rubenstein, the Kennedy Center trustees, and of course, Michael Kaiser, who will conclude 13 years of tremendous service as the President of the Kennedy Center next year. So on behalf of Michelle and myself, we want to all thank Michael so much for the extraordinary work that he has done.

As always, this celebration wouldn't be what it is without the enthusiasm of the Cochair of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, George Stevens. George. [*Applause*] And his son Michael. And together, for years they've put on this event to honor the artists whose brilliance has touched our lives.

President Kennedy once said of such creative genius that, "The highest duty of the writer, the composer, the artist is to remain true to himself and to let the chips fall where they may." Now, that's easy to say when—as they do for these artists—the chips usually fall in your favor, whether at Woodstock or the Oscars or elite venues all over the world.

But the fact is that the diverse group of extraordinary individuals we honor today haven't just proven themselves to be the best of the best. Despite all their success, all their fame, they've remained true to themselves and inspired the rest of us to do the same.

Now, growing up in Harlem, Martina Arroyo's parents told her she could be and do anything. That was, until she said that she wanted to be an opera singer. [*Laughter*] Her father—perhaps not fully appreciating the versatility required of an opera singer—said he didn't want his daughter to be like a can-can girl. [*Laughter*] In her neighborhood back then, opera was not the obvious career path.

And there weren't a lot of opera singers who looked like her that she could look up to.

But Martina had a dream she couldn't shake, so she auditioned relentlessly and jumped at any role she could get. Along the way, she earned money by teaching and working as a social worker in New York City. And when she got a call from the Metropolitan Opera asking her to fill in the lead for "Aida," she was sure it was just a friend pulling her leg. It wasn't until they called back that she realized the request was real, and she just about fell over in shock. But in that breakout role, she won fans around the world, beloved for her tremendous voice and unparalleled grace.

Martina has sung the great roles: Mozart's Donna Anna, Puccini's Madame Butterfly, Verdi's Lady Macbeth, and of course, Aida. She's played the world's stages, from Cincinnati to Paris to Israel. She's broken through barriers, broadening our notion of what magnificent artists look like and where they come from.

And along the way, she's helped people of all ages, all over the world, discover the art form that she loves so deeply. For a lot of folks, it was Martina Arroyo who helped them see and hear and love the beauty and power of opera. And with her charitable foundation, she is nurturing the next generation of performers: smart, talented, driven, and joyous, just like her. For moving us with the power of her voice and empowering others to share theirs too, we honor Martina Arroyo.

Now, Herbie Hancock played his first concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra when he was 11 years old. Two years later, he heard a classmate play jazz piano at a variety show and thought: "That's my instrument, and he can do that? Why can't I?" It turned out, he could. [*Laughter*]

By 23, Herbie was playing with Miles Davis in New York and on his way to becoming a jazz legend. And he didn't stop there. In the seventies, he put his electrical engineering studies to work and helped create electronic music. In the eighties, his hit "Rockit" became an anthem for a fledging new genre called hip-hop. At one recent show, he played alongside an iMac and five iPads. [*Laughter*] And a few years ago, he became the first jazz artist in 43 years to win a Grammy for best album.

But what makes Herbie so special isn't just how he approaches music, it's how he approaches life. He tours the world as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. He's done so many benefit concerts that Joni Mitchell once gave him a watch inscribed with the words: "He played real good for free." [*Laughter*] And we know this because he's played here for free a lot. [*Laughter*] We work Herbie, I'm telling you. [*Laughter*]

But we just love the man. Michelle and I love this man, not just because he's from Chicago. Not just because he and I had the same hairdo in the 1970s. [*Laughter*] Not just because he's got that spooky Dorian Gray, doesn't-get-older thing going on. [*Laughter*] It is his spirit, it is his energy—which is relentless and challenging—and he's always pushing boundaries. Herbie once said of his outlook: "We're going to see some unbelievable changes. And I would rather be on the side of pushing for that than waiting for somebody else to do it."

Well, Herbie, we are glad that you didn't wait for somebody else to do what you've done, because nobody else could. For always pushing us forward, we honor Herbie Hancock.

When a 22-year-old Carlos Santana took the stage at Woodstock, few people outside his hometown of San Francisco knew who he was. And the feeling was mutual. Carlos was in such a—shall we say—altered state of mind that he remembers almost nothing about the other performers. [*Laughter*] He thought the neck of his guitar was an electric snake. [*Laughter*]

But that did not stop Carlos and his band from whipping the crowd into such a frenzy with a mind-blowing mix of blues and jazz and R&B and Latin music. They'd never heard anything like it. And almost overnight, Carlos Santana became a star.

It was a pretty steep climb for a young man who grew up in Mexico, playing the violin for tourists, charging 50 cents a song. But as a teenager, Carlos fell in love with the guitar. He developed a distinctive sound that has drawn admirers from Bob Dylan to Herbie Hancock.

And he gave voice to a Latino community that had too often been invisible to too many Americans. "You can cuss or you can pray with the guitar," Carlos says. He found a way to do both. [*Laughter*]

And today, with 10 Grammys under his belt, Carlos is considered one of the greatest guitarists of all time. And he's still attracting new fans. Back in 2000, his album "Supernatural" beat out Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys to get to the number 1 on the charts. Kids were listening to Carlos who hadn't even heard of Woodstock. But despite all his success, Carlos says he still feels blessed to "be able to play a piece of wood with strings and touch people's hearts." So for blessing us all with his music, we honor Carlos Santana.

Now, when you first become President, one of the people—questions that people ask you is, what's really going on at Area 51? [*Laughter*] When I wanted to know, I called Shirley MacLaine. [*Laughter*] I think I just became the first President to ever publicly mention Area 51. How's that, Shirley? [*Laughter*] So—[*applause*].

We love Shirley MacLaine. She's unconventional, and that makes her incomparable, with nearly 60 years of a reign as one of the most celebrated stars in movie history to prove it. "There are some performers that are indelible," said one fan about Shirley. "We fall early, and we fall hard for them, and we follow them for the rest of their lives." Now, that fan just happens to be a legend in her own right, who we honored here 2 years ago: Meryl Streep. But Meryl is not the only one who fell hard.

Shirley has been drawing fans, including me, since—well, not since she first lit up the big screen—because in 1955, she was in Alfred Hitchcock's "The Trouble with Harry," but she's still been spitting fire with the same old spunk, most recently playing the American grandma in "Downton Abbey," which Michelle, I think, got some early previews for. [*Laughter*] Along the way, Shirley has racked up about every Hollywood award that is out there. That's why her nickname Powerhouse is so fitting. The truth is Shirley earned that nickname for hitting the most home runs on the boys' baseball team when she was a kid. But I'd say that it still works pretty well to describe her today.

And that's because Shirley MacLaine's career isn't defined by a list of film roles and musical performances. Through raucous comedies and stirring dramas and spirited musicals, Shirley has been fearless, and she's been honest, and she's tackled complicated characters, and she's revealed a grittier, deeper truth in each one of those characters, giving every audience the experience of cinema at its best. It's a motto she has lived by: "Don't be afraid to go out on a limb. That's where all the fruit is." For her risk-taking, for her theatrical brilliance, for her limitless capacity for wonder, we honor this American powerhouse, Miss Shirley MacLaine.

And finally, in a world full of brilliant musicians, there's only one Piano Man. The son of a Jewish father who left Germany for America to escape the Nazis, Billy Joel started piano lessons as a boy growing up on Long Island. His father was a classical pianist, so that was Billy's training too—until the night he and millions of Americans watched the Beatles play "The Ed Sullivan Show." Most people thought, "I want to hear more music like that." But Billy thought, "I want to make my own music like that." And from then on, it was all rock and roll to him.

With lyrics that speak of love and class and failure and success, angry young men and the joy of becoming a father, he has become one of the most successful musicians in history, selling more than 150 million records.

Above all, Billy Joel sings about America: About the workers living in Allentown after the factories closed down. About soldiers home from the war, forever changed, bidding "Goodnight Saigon." Commercial fishermen struggling to make a living in the waters off of Long Island, sailing the "Downeaster 'Alexa.'" The sights and sounds of that city like no other, which can put anyone in a "New York State of Mind." And of course, the ragtag bunch of regulars at the bar where he started out, shouting at him again and again to "sing us a song."

Billy Joel probably would have been a songwriter no matter where he was born. But we

are certainly lucky that he ended up here. And the hard-working folks he's met and the music that he's heard across our Nation come through in every note and every lyric that he's written. For an artist whose songs are sung around the world, but which are thoroughly, wonderfully American, we honor Billy Joel.

So Martina Arroyo, Herbie Hancock, Carlos Santana, Shirley MacLaine, Billy Joel: Each of our brilliant honorees has given us something unique and enriched us beyond measure, as individuals and as a nation. Together they bring us closer to President Kennedy's vision of the arts as a great humanizing and truth-telling experience. Their triumphs have lifted our spirits and lifted our Nation and left us a better and richer place. And for that we will always be grateful. So we thank you all.

God bless you, and please join me in saluting one more time our remarkable 2013 Kennedy Center Honorees.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Joni Mitchell; and actor Meryl Streep.

Statement on the Multilateral Trade Agreement Reached at the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Meeting in Bali, Indonesia
December 8, 2013

I am pleased to welcome the announcement from Bali, Indonesia, of the first fully multilateral trade agreement in the 20-year history of the World Trade Organization.

This new deal, and particularly the new trade facilitation agreement, will eliminate redtape and bureaucratic delay for goods shipped around the globe. Small businesses will be among the biggest winners, since they encounter the greatest difficulties in navigating the current system. By some estimates, the global economic value of the new WTO deal could be worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

The WTO's Bali agreement also represents the rejuvenation of the multilateral trading system that supports millions of American jobs and offers a forum for the robust enforcement of America's trade rights. As such, we are proud of the United States leadership role in reaching this accord and congratulate WTO Director-General Roberto Carvalho de Azevêdo and our fellow WTO members on this achievement.

Statement on the United States Auto Industry
December 9, 2013

When I took office, the American auto industry—the heartbeat of American manufacturing—was on the verge of collapse. Two of the Big Three, GM and Chrysler, were on the brink of failure, threatening to take suppliers, distributors, and entire communities down with them. In the midst of what was already the worst recession since the Great Depression, another 1 million Americans were in danger of losing their jobs.

As President, I refused to let that happen. I refused to walk away from American workers and an iconic American industry. But in exchange for rescuing and retooling GM and Chrysler with taxpayer dollars, we demanded responsibility and results. In 2011, we marked the end of an important chapter as Chrysler repaid every dime and more of what it owed the American taxpayers from the investment we made under my administration's watch. Today we're closing the book by selling the remaining shares of the Federal Government's investment in General Motors. GM has now repaid every taxpayer dollar my administration committed to its rescue, plus billions invested by the previous administration.

Less than 5 years later, each of the Big Three automakers is now strong enough to

stand on its own. They're profitable for the first time in nearly a decade. The industry has added more than 372,000 new jobs, its strongest growth since the 1990s. Thanks to the workers on our assembly lines, some of the most high-tech, fuel-efficient cars in the world are once again designed, engineered, and built right here in America, and the rest of the world is buying more of them than ever before.

When things looked darkest for our most iconic industry, we bet on what was true: the ingenuity and resilience of the proud, hard-working men and women who make this country strong. Today that bet has paid off. The American auto industry is back.

For our autoworkers and the communities that depend on them, the road we've taken these past 5 years has been a long and difficult one. But it's one we've traveled together. And as long as there's more work to do to restore opportunity and broad-based growth for all Americans, that's what we'll keep doing to reach the brighter days ahead.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Switzerland-United States Social Security Agreement

December 9, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95–216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)), I transmit herewith an Agreement on Social Security between the United States of America and the Swiss Confederation, signed at Bern on December 3, 2012, (the "U.S.-Swiss Agreement"). The Agreement consists of two instruments: a principal agreement and an administrative arrangement, and upon entry into force, will replace: the Agreement between the United States of America and the Swiss Confederation on Social Security with final protocol, signed July 18, 1979; the Administrative Agreement between the United States of America and the Swiss Confederation for the Implementation of the Agreement on Social Security of July 18, 1979, signed December 20, 1979; and the Supplementary Agreement between the two Contracting States, signed June 1, 1988.

The U.S.-Swiss Agreement is similar in objective to the social security agreements already in force with most of the European Union member states, Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Norway, and the Republic of Korea. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation and to help prevent the lost benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries. The principal updates encompassed in the Agreement include amendments to rules for entitlement to Swiss disability pensions paid to ensure equality of treatments between U.S. and Swiss nationals, updates to personal information confidentiality provisions, and modifications necessary to take into account changes in U.S. and Swiss laws since 1988.

The U.S.-Swiss Agreement contains all provisions mandated by section 233 of the Social Security Act and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4) of the Social Security Act.

I also transmit, for the information of the Congress, a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the U.S.-Swiss Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the provisions of the principal agreement and administrative arrangement. Annexed to this report is the report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act on the number of individuals affected by the Agreement and the effect of the Agreement on the estimated income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program. The Department of State and

the Social Security Administration have recommended the U.S.-Swiss Agreement and related documents to me.

I commend the U.S.-Swiss Agreement on Social Security and related documents.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
December 9, 2013.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa
December 10, 2013

Thank you. To Graça Machel and the Mandela family; to President Zuma and members of the Government; to heads of states and government, past and present; distinguished guests: It is a singular honor to be with you today, to celebrate a life like no other. To the people of South Africa—people of every race and walk of life—the world thanks you for sharing Nelson Mandela with us. His struggle was your struggle. His triumph was your triumph. Your dignity and your hope found expression in his life. And your freedom, your democracy, is his cherished legacy.

It is hard to eulogize any man, to capture in words not just the facts and the dates that make a life, but the essential truth of a person: their private joys and sorrows; the quiet moments and unique qualities that illuminate someone's soul. How much harder to do so for a giant of history, who moved a nation toward justice and, in the process, moved billions around the world.

Born during World War I, far from the corridors of power, a boy raised herding cattle and tutored by the elders of his Thembu tribe, Madiba would emerge as the last great liberator of the 20th century. Like Gandhi, he would lead a resistance movement, a movement that at its start had little prospect for success. Like Dr. King, he would give potent voice to the claims of the oppressed and the moral necessity of racial justice. He would endure a brutal imprisonment that began in the time of Kennedy and Khrushchev and reached the final days of the cold war. Emerging from prison, without the force of arms, he would—like Abraham Lincoln—hold his country together when it threatened to break apart. And like America's Founding Fathers, he would erect a constitutional order to preserve freedom for future generations: a commitment to democracy and rule of law ratified not only by his election, but by his willingness to step down from power after only one term.

Given the sweep of his life, the scope of his accomplishments, the adoration that he so rightly earned, it's tempting, I think, to remember Nelson Mandela as an icon, smiling and serene, detached from the tawdry affairs of lesser men. But Madiba himself strongly resisted such a lifeless portrait. Instead, Madiba insisted on sharing with us his doubts and his fears, his miscalculations along with his victories. "I am not a saint," he said, "unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying."

It was precisely because he could admit to imperfection—because he could be so full of good humor, even mischief, despite the heavy burdens that he carried—that we loved him so. He was not a bust made of marble, he was a man of flesh and blood: a son and a husband, a father and a friend. And that's why we learned so much from him, and that's why we can learn from him still. For nothing he achieved was inevitable. In the arc of his life, we see a man who earned his place in history through struggle and shrewdness and persistence and faith. He tells us what is possible not just in the pages of history books, but in our own lives as well.

Mandela showed us the power of action, of taking risks on behalf of our ideals. Perhaps Mandela was right that he inherited, "a proud rebelliousness, a stubborn sense of fairness" from his father. And we know he shared with millions of Black and colored South Africans

the anger born of, "a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments . . . a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people," he said.

But like other early giants of the ANC—the Sisulus and Tambos—Madiba disciplined his anger and channeled his desire to fight into organization and platforms and strategies for action so men and women could stand up for their God-given dignity. Moreover, he accepted the consequences of his actions, knowing that standing up to powerful interests and injustice carries a price: "I have fought against White domination, and I have fought against Black domination. I've cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and [with] equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Mandela has taught us the power of action, but he also taught us the power of ideas, the importance of reason and arguments, the need to study not only those who you agree with, but also those who you don't agree with. He understood that ideas cannot be contained by prison walls or extinguished by a sniper's bullet. He turned his trial into an indictment of apartheid because of his eloquence and his passion, but also because of his training as an advocate. He used decades of prison to sharpen his arguments, but also to spread his thirst for knowledge to others in the movement. And he learned the language and the customs of his oppressor so that one day, he might better convey to them how their own freedom depend upon his.

Mandela demonstrated that action and ideas are not enough. No matter how right, they must be chiseled into law and institutions. He was practical, testing his beliefs against the hard surface of circumstance and history. On core principles, he was unyielding, which is why he could rebuff offers of unconditional release, reminding the apartheid regime that "prisoners cannot enter into contracts."

But as he showed in painstaking negotiations to transfer power and draft new laws, he was not afraid to compromise for the sake of a larger goal. And because he was not only a leader of a movement, but a skillful politician, the Constitution that emerged was worthy of this multiracial democracy, true to his vision of laws that protect minority as well as majority rights and the precious freedoms of every South African.

And finally, Mandela understood the ties that bind the human spirit. There is a word in South Africa, *ubuntu*, a word that captures Mandela's greatest gift: his recognition that we are all bound together in ways that are invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others and caring for those around us.

We can never know how much of this sense was innate in him or how much was shaped in a dark and solitary cell. But we remember the gestures, large and small—introducing his jailers as honored guests at his Inauguration, taking a pitch in a Springbok uniform, turning his family's heartbreak into a call to confront HIV/AIDS—that revealed the depths of his empathy and his understanding. He not only embodied *ubuntu*, he taught millions to find that truth within themselves.

It took a man like Madiba to free not just the prisoner, but the jailer as well; to show that you must trust others so that they may trust you; to teach that reconciliation is not a matter of ignoring a cruel past, but a means of confronting it with inclusion and generosity and truth. He changed laws, but he also changed hearts.

For the people of South Africa, for those he inspired around the globe, Madiba's passing is rightly a time of mourning and a time to celebrate a heroic life. But I believe it should also prompt in each of us a time for self-reflection. With honesty, regardless of our station or our circumstance, we must ask, how well have I applied his lessons in my own life? It's a question I ask myself, as a man and as a President.

We know that, like South Africa, the United States had to overcome centuries of racial subjugation. As was true here, it took sacrifice—the sacrifices of countless people, known and unknown—to see the dawn of a new day. Michelle and I are beneficiaries of that struggle. But in America and in South Africa and in

countries all around the globe, we cannot allow our progress to cloud the fact that our work is not yet done.

The struggles that follow the victory of formal equality or universal franchise may not be as filled with drama and moral clarity as those that came before, but they are no less important. For around the world today, we still see children suffering from hunger and disease. We still see run-down schools. We still see young people without prospects for the future. Around the world today, men and women are still imprisoned for their political beliefs and are still persecuted for what they look like and how they worship and who they love. That is happening today.

And so we too must act on behalf of justice. We too must act on behalf of peace. There are too many people who happily embrace Madiba's legacy of racial reconciliation, but passionately resist even modest reforms that would challenge chronic poverty and growing inequality. There are too many leaders who claim solidarity with Madiba's struggle for freedom, but do not tolerate dissent from their own people. And there are too many of us on the sidelines, comfortable in complacency or cynicism when our voices must be heard.

The questions we face today—how to promote equality and justice, how to uphold freedom and human rights, how to end conflict and sectarian war—these things do not have easy answers. But there were no easy answers in front of that child born in World War I. Nelson Mandela reminds us that it always seems impossible until it is done. South Africa shows that is true. South Africa shows we can change, that we can choose a world defined not by our differences, but by our common hopes. We can choose a world defined not by conflict, but by peace and justice and opportunity.

We will never see the likes of Nelson Mandela again. But let me say to the young people of Africa and the young people around the world: You too can make his life's work your own. Over 30 years ago, while still a student, I learned of Nelson Mandela and the struggles taking place in this beautiful land, and it stirred something in me. It woke me up to my responsibilities to others and to myself, and it set me on an improbable journey that finds me here today. And while I will always fall short of Madiba's example, he makes me want to be a better man. He speaks to what's best inside us.

After this great liberator is laid to rest, and when we have returned to our cities and villages and rejoined our daily routines, let us search for his strength. Let us search for his largeness of spirit somewhere inside of ourselves. And when the night grows dark, when injustice weighs heavy on our hearts, when our best laid plans seem beyond our reach, let us think of Madiba and the words that brought him comfort within the four walls of his cell:

> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate:
> I am the captain of my soul.

What a magnificent soul it was. We will miss him deeply. May God bless the memory of Nelson Mandela. May God bless the people of South Africa.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:31 p.m. at First National Bank Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Graça Machel, wife of former President Mandela, who died on December 5.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Patricia A. Millett as a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit
December 10, 2013

I'm pleased that in a bipartisan vote, the Senate has confirmed Patricia Millett to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, filling a vacancy that has been open since 2005. Ms. Millett is a leading appellate lawyer who has made 32 argu-

ments before the Supreme Court, the second most by a female advocate. She has served in the Department of Justice for both Democratic and Republican Presidents. I'm confident she will serve with distinction on the Federal bench.

Statement on Financial Regulatory Reform
December 10, 2013

Five years ago, a financial catastrophe on Wall Street was rapidly fueling a punishing recession on Main Street that ultimately cost millions of jobs and hurt families across the country. So as we prepared steps to rescue our economy and put Americans back to work, we also put in place tough rules of the road to make sure a crisis like that never happened again: rules that reward sound financial practices, allow honest innovation, and strengthen the financial system's ability to support job creation and durable economic growth.

As part of this Wall Street reform, we fought to include the Volcker rule, a rule that makes sure big banks can't make risky bets with their customers' deposits. The Volcker rule will make it illegal for firms to use Government-insured money to make speculative bets that threaten the entire financial system and demand a new era of accountability from CEOs who must sign off on their firm's practices.

Our financial system will be safer and the American people are more secure because we fought to include this protection in the law. I thank Paul Volcker, a former Chairman of the Federal Reserve and adviser I trust, for helping to create this important safeguard. I also thank Secretary Lew and the regulators who worked diligently to finalize the rule by the end of this year as we called on them to do. I encourage Congress to give these regulators adequate funding to effectively and efficiently implement the rule, which will help protect hard-working families and business owners from future crisis and restore everyone's certainty and confidence in America's dynamic financial system.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Melvin L. Watt as Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency
December 10, 2013

More than 5 years after a housing bubble burst and nearly brought down our entire economy, our housing market is steadily healing. Home values and sales are rising. Construction is up, foreclosures are down, and millions of families have come out from underwater on their mortgages. Earlier this year, I laid out my strategy to help more middle class families buy a home, offer more relief to responsible homeowners and more options for families who aren't yet ready to buy. And as we turn the page on the bubble-and-bust mentality that created this mess, we have to build a housing system that's rock solid and rewards responsibility for future generations of American home buyers so that a home is what it's always been: a source of pride and middle class security.

That's where Mel Watt comes in. Seven months ago, I nominated Mel to lead the agency charged with looking out for hard-working families by enforcing rules of the road for the mortgage industry. And today he's finally been confirmed to do that job. Mel comes from humble roots. He's represented the people of North Carolina in Congress for 20 years. He's the right person to protect Americans who work hard and play by the rules every day, and he'll be the right regulator to make sure the kind of crisis we just went through never happens again. I thank the Senate for confirming his nomination, and I look forward to Mel's work on behalf of the American people.

Statement on the Federal Budget
December 10, 2013

Earlier this year, I called on Congress to work together on a balanced approach to a budget that grows our economy faster and creates more jobs, not through aimless, reckless spending cuts that harm our economy now, but by making sure we can afford to invest in the things that have always grown our economy and strengthened our middle class. Today's bipartisan budget agreement is a good first step.

This agreement replaces a portion of the across-the-board spending cuts known as the sequester that have harmed students, seniors, and middle class families and served as a mindless drag on our economy over the last year. It clears the path for critical investments in things like scientific research, which has the potential to unleash new innovation and new industries. It's balanced and includes targeted fee increases and spending cuts designed in a way that doesn't hurt our economy or break the ironclad promises we've made to our seniors. It does all this while slightly reducing our deficits over time, coming on top of 4 years of the fastest deficit reduction since the end of World War II. And because it's the first budget that leaders of both parties have agreed to in a few years, the American people should not have to endure the pain of another Government shutdown for the next 2 years.

This agreement doesn't include everything I'd like, and I know many Republicans feel the same way. That's the nature of compromise. But it's a good sign that Democrats and Republicans in Congress were able to come together and break the cycle of shortsighted, crisis-driven decision-making to get this done. That's the way the American people expect Washington to work. I want to thank Senator Murray, Congressman Ryan, and all the other leaders who helped forge this bipartisan agreement. And I want to call on Members of Congress from both parties to take the next step and actually pass a budget based on this agreement so I can sign it into law and our economy can continue growing and creating jobs without more Washington headwinds.

But as I said last week, the defining challenge of our time is not whether Congress can pass a budget, it's whether we can make sure our economy works for every working American. And while today's agreement is a good first step, Congress has a lot more to do on that front. In the immediate term, Congress should extend unemployment insurance so more than a million Americans looking for work don't lose a vital economic lifeline right after Christmas and our economy doesn't take a hit. And beyond that, they should do more to expand broad-based growth and opportunity: by creating more jobs that pay better wages, by growing our economy, and by offering a path into the middle class for every American willing to work for it.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Cornelia T.L. "Nina" Pillard as a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit
December 12, 2013

I thank the Senate for confirming Nina Pillard to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which for the first time will have five active female judges on the bench. Throughout her career, Ms. Pillard has displayed an unwavering commitment to justice and integrity. Her landmark accomplishments on behalf of women and families include Supreme Court cases defending the constitutionality of the Family and Medical Leave Act and opening the doors of the Virginia Military Institute to female students. I'm confident she will be a diligent, thoughtful, and judicious addition to the DC Circuit.

NOTE: The statement referred to Judges Janice Rogers Brown, Karen L. Henderson, Patricia A. Millett, and Judith W. Rogers, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Newly Elected Mayors
December 13, 2013

Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome not only some of the most outstanding mayors in the country, but also folks who are representing incredible cities, world-class cities, that are going to be central to America's economic growth and progress for years to come.

I've always said that mayors don't have time to be ideological, and they don't really have time to be partisan, because they, every day, are held accountable for concretely delivering the services that people count on all across the country. And I think it's for that reason that when we think about mayors, we think about folks who actually get stuff done.

This is an outstanding group of both mayors and mayors-elect, representing some of our largest cities. They have a shared vision of cities as being critical hubs in which we're creating jobs; bringing businesses; seeing startups develop; making sure that there are pathways, gateways for opportunity for people from the surrounding areas, the surrounding States, the regions, and in many cases, the world, because I think you've got a lot of immigrant populations that naturally gravitate towards the diversity and dynamism of the city.

And although we have seen terrific progress in our cities, as we have across the country over the last several years—millions of jobs being created, the housing market starting to recover, businesses investing again, manufacturing making an extraordinary comeback—what we know is, we've still got a lot of work to do to deliver a vision that we all share, which is an America where if you work hard, you can make it.

And what that means is, is that my hope and goal out of this meeting is, we immediately set up a strong partnership with all the mayors here and all the mayors who aren't here where we get a clear sense of what their vision is and how they're trying to deliver services; how we can make sure that our kids are getting the very best education possible; how we make sure that we are creating the platforms, the infrastructure for jobs to succeed—or jobs to be created and businesses to succeed in these cities; how we make sure our transportation dollars are flowing in a way that maximizes economic development that, hopefully, reduces congestion and rush-hour traffic—I suspect that's something that some of you have heard from your constituents about—[*laughter*]—how we make sure that there's a strong social safety net there that is not a place where people stay over the long term, but rather is a mechanism whereby people who have had some bad luck can get back on their feet and get back into the workforce.

So I'm very much looking forward to the conversation. In the meantime, at the Federal level, there's some things that we can do to help mayors. If we in fact can get this budget deal completed and out of the Senate, we can get away for the first time in a couple of years from the constant brinksmanship and crisis governance that we've seen up on Capitol Hill that impedes growth and makes businesses and investors less certain about wanting to put their money in. So that would be an important achievement, and that's something the Federal Government can do to help make.

One element that's not in this budget that needs to be passed right away is UI, unemployment insurance. You've got potentially 1.3 million people who, during Christmastime, are going to lose their unemployment benefits, at a time when it's still very difficult for a lot of folks to find a job. And that's not just bad for those individuals and for those families, that's bad for our economy, and that's bad for our cities, because if they don't have the money to pay the rent or be able to buy food for their families, that has an impact on demand and businesses and it can have a depressive effect generally. In fact, what we know is, the economists have said failing to extend

unemployment benefits is going to have a drag on economic growth for next year.

So there are some basic things that we can do just to create a better economic environment for these outstanding mayors. There are some areas—for example, raising the minimum wage—that could have a tremendous boost in a lot of the cities where there are a lot of service workers who get up and do some of the critical work for all of us every single day, but oftentimes, still find themselves just barely above poverty or, in some cases, below poverty.

So what I want to do is explore ideas with them. We wish them luck. You can see that it's a diverse group, but what binds them together is a commitment to helping people succeed in this country.

And so I want to congratulate all of them, and I'm looking forward to, over the next 3 years for me, working with them for the benefit of their constituencies. Many of them may end up being around for 20 years and—[*laughter*]—so they'll have other Presidents to work with.

But thank you so much for coming in.

[*At this point, several reporters called out questions.*]

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the Resignation of Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs Miguel E. Rodriguez
December 13, 2013

Miguel Rodriguez has served in my administration from day one. After a tour with Secretary Clinton at the State Department, he joined my staff in October 2011 before agreeing to serve as my Director of Legislative Affairs earlier this year. And throughout some of this year's most contentious legislative battles, Miguel worked tirelessly to bridge the partisan divide, forge consensus, and seek out solutions that helped us move forward. As the son of immigrants, I know Miguel took particular pride in the Senate's passage of a bipartisan, commonsense immigration reform plan, something that we are going to see through. I'm grateful for his service, and I will miss his advice and counsel, but I am pleased that Katie Beirne Fallon has agreed to serve as my next Director of Legislative Affairs. As a veteran of Congress and my Deputy Director of Communications, she has the deep expertise and strong relationships required to build on the progress we've made this year and advance my top priority: creating jobs and expanding broad-based growth and opportunity for every American.

NOTE: The statement referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces
December 13, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM OBJECTIVES

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. In support of these and other overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Such operations and deployments have been reported previously, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's leadership of Afghanistan.

The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces to carry out future acts of international terrorism, and we have continued to work with our counterterrorism partners to disrupt and degrade the capabilities of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. As necessary, in response to this terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter this terrorist threat to the United States.

Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces continue to pursue and engage remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan while transitioning to an Afghan security lead. There are approximately 55,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and the United States Armed Forces are on track to meet the Afghanistan Force Management Level of 34,000 by February 12, 2014.

The United Nations (U.N.) Security Council most recently extended its authorization of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan until December 31, 2014, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2120 (October 10, 2013). The mission of ISAF, under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population. Forty-eight nations, including the United States and all 28 NATO members, contribute forces to ISAF. For the last few years, the ISAF campaign has focused on preparing the ANSF for full security transition in 2014.

In June 2013, at the "Milestone 2013" ceremony, the ANSF assumed the lead for security nationwide. ISAF is now in support of the ANSF. The only unilateral operations that ISAF conducts are in support of its own security, sustainment, and redeployment. In the coming months, ISAF will focus on developing the sustainability of the ANSF and assisting the ANSF as the Afghan government plans for the elections in 2014. The security transition process—as agreed to at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon and reaffirmed at the 2012 NATO

Summit in Chicago—remains on track and the ANSF are expected to assume full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

As I noted in my report of June 14, 2013, on March 25, 2013, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Afghan government under which the United States transferred all Afghan nationals detained by U.S. forces in Afghanistan to the custody and control of the Afghan government. Pursuant to the MOU, any new Afghan detainees are to be transferred to Afghan custody and control within 96 hours after capture. United States forces in Afghanistan continue to detain approximately 53 third-country nationals under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

Libya. In Libya, on October 5, 2013, U.S. Armed Forces captured longtime al-Qa'ida member Abu Anas al Libi.

Somalia. In Somalia, the U.S. military has worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab. On the night of October 4, 2013, U.S. Armed Forces conducted a raid in Somalia to capture a member of al-Qa'ida who is also a top commander in the terrorist group al-Shabaab. The operation did not result in the capture of the targeted individual.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to dismantle operationally and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for the approximately 162 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

As indicated in my report of June 14, 2013, U.S. military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in Mali and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 200.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

In October and November 2011, U.S. military personnel with appropriate combat equipment deployed to Uganda to serve as advisors to regional forces of the African Union Regional Task Force (AU–RTF) that are working to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield, and to protect local populations. The number of U.S. military personnel deployed to the central Africa region, including advisors deployed for this mission and personnel providing logistical and support functions to this and other missions, is approximately 120.

United States forces are working with select partner nation forces of the AU–RTF to enhance cooperation, information-sharing and synchronization, operational planning, and overall effectiveness. Elements of these U.S. forces have deployed to forward locations in the LRA-affected areas, including the Republic of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic in order to enhance regional efforts against the LRA. These forces, however, will not engage LRA forces except in self-defense. It is in the U.S. national security interest to help our regional partners in Africa to develop their capability to address threats to regional peace and security, including the threat posed by the LRA. The United States is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to help the governments and

people of this region in their efforts to end the threat posed by the LRA and to address the impact of the LRA's atrocities.

MARITIME INTERCEPTION OPERATIONS

As noted in previous reports, the United States remains prepared to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of each of the geographic combatant commands. These maritime operations are aimed at stopping the movement, arming, and financing of certain international terrorist groups, and also include operations aimed at stopping proliferation by sea of weapons of mass destruction and related materials.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 715 military personnel are assigned to the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

As detailed in my report of June 21, 2013, at the request of the Government of Jordan, a combat-equipped detachment of approximately 700 U.S. personnel remain in Jordan following participation in a training exercise that ended on June 20, 2013. The detachment includes Patriot missile systems, fighter aircraft, and related support, command, control, and communications personnel and systems. These forces joined U.S. forces already in Jordan for a total of approximately 1,500 U.S. military personnel. These forces will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo.

Currently, 23 NATO Allies contribute to KFOR. Eight non-NATO countries also participate. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 670 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,900 personnel.

REGIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

As stated in my report of June 14, 2013, U.S. Armed Forces remain in Libya and Yemen to support the security of U.S. personnel. These forces will remain deployed, in full coordination with the respective host governments, until the security situation no longer requires them.

Additional information about regional security operations is provided in the classified annex.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107–40 and other statutes) and as Chief Executive, as well as my constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address
December 14, 2013

One year ago today, a quiet, peaceful town was shattered by unspeakable violence. Six dedicated school workers and 20 beautiful children were taken from our lives forever. As parents, as Americans, the news filled us with grief.

Newtown is a town like so many of our hometowns. The victims were educators and kids that could have been any of our own. And our hearts were broken: for the families that lost a piece of their heart; for the communities changed forever; for the survivors, so young, whose innocence was torn away far too soon.

But beneath the sadness, we also felt a sense of resolve that these tragedies must end and that to end them, we must change. From the very beginning, our efforts were led by the parents of Newtown—men and women, impossibly brave—who stepped forward in the hopes that they might spare others their heartbreak. And they were joined by millions of Americans—mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers—who refused to accept these acts of violence as somehow inevitable.

Over the past year, their voices have sustained us, and their example has inspired us: to be better parents and better neighbors; to give our children everything they need to face the world without fear; to meet our responsibilities not just to our own families, but to our communities. More than the tragedy itself, it's how Newtown will be remembered.

And on this anniversary of a day we will never forget, that's the example we should continue to follow. Because we haven't yet done enough to make our communities and our country safer. We have to do more to keep dangerous people from getting their hands on a gun so easily. We have to do more to heal troubled minds. We have to do everything we can to protect our children from harm and make them feel loved and valued and cared for.

And as we do, we can't lose sight of the fact that real change won't come from Washington. It will come the way it's always come: from you, from the American people. As a nation, we can't stop every act of violence. We can't heal every troubled mind. But if we want to live in a country where we can go to work, send our kids to school, and walk our streets free from fear, we have to keep trying. We have to keep caring. We have to treat every child like they're ours. Like those in Sandy Hook, we must choose to love.

And together, we must and can change. Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:30 p.m. on December 13 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast on December 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 13, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 14.

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington"
December 15, 2013

Thank you. Well, merry Christmas, everybody! I want to thank our host, Hugh Jackman, for keeping our safety in mind and leaving Wolverine's claws at home. [*Laughter*] It can't be easy to wrap presents with those things. [*Laughter*] Good for carving up "roast beast" though. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the incredible performers for sharing their talents and their holiday spirit with us tonight. And we appreciate the whole team at Time Warner and the National Building Museum who make it possible for our fellow Americans to enjoy these evenings' performances.

Every year, we mark the holiday season with celebrations and good cheer. And I should remind my girls that I like getting Christmas presents as much as anybody. [*Laughter*] But

this is also a time to remember the story of a child born to two faithful travelers on a holy night, long ago.

The sacred birth of Jesus Christ was God's gift to man on Earth. And through His example, He taught us that we should love the Lord, love our neighbors as we love ourselves. It's a teaching that has endured for generations. And today, it lies at the heart of my faith and that of millions of Americans and billions around the globe.

No matter who we are or where we come from or how we worship, it's a message of hope and devotion that can unite all of us this holiday season. It compels all of us to reach out and help our less fortunate citizens—our poor, our sick, our neighbors in need—and to serve those who sacrifice so much on our behalf.

And that's why tonight's celebration benefits the Children's National Medical Center and all the children whose lives they touch and save, including all the little elves who are here tonight. [*Laughter*]

And that's why, with our men and women in uniform serving far from home in harm's way, we thank them as well and their families. And we wish, this holiday season and all seasons, for peace on Earth.

To all Americans, from our family to yours, God bless you, and have a very merry Christmas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:40 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to actor Hugh Jackman.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Jeh C. Johnson as Secretary of Homeland Security

December 16, 2013

I am pleased the Senate has confirmed Jeh Johnson as our next Secretary of Homeland Security with broad bipartisan support. In Jeh our dedicated homeland security professionals will have a strong leader with a deep understanding of the threats we face and a proven ability to work across agencies and complex organizations to keep America secure. Jeh has been a critical member of my national security team, and he helped to shape some of our most successful national security policies and strategies. As Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh will play a leading role in our efforts to protect the homeland against terrorist attacks, adapt to changing threats, stay prepared for natural disasters, strengthen our border security, and make our immigration system fairer, while upholding the values, civil liberties, and laws that make America great. I look forward to Jeh's counsel and sound judgment for years to come.

Statement on Representative James D. Matheson's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

December 17, 2013

Jim Matheson has proudly represented the people of Utah for more than 12 years in the United States Congress. He has been a forceful advocate of our Nation's veterans and worked to strengthen our economy through his support of key trade agreements. Michelle and I thank Congressman Matheson for his service and wish him, his wife Amy, and their two sons the very best in the future.

NOTE: The statement referred to Will and Harris Matheson, sons of Rep. Matheson.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Mothers To Discuss the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and an Exchange With Reporters
December 18, 2013

The President. Well, Michelle and I just had a wonderful conversation with this group of moms and one aunt who have been working tirelessly out there on behalf of our mission, which is to make sure that everybody in America, regardless of where they live, their background, that they are able to get high-quality health care coverage that provides them with financial protection and looks after them when they get sick.

And obviously, over the last couple of months, we had a rocky start with the website and all this. Despite that, we've seen hundreds of thousands of people signing up, more and more every single day, in part because we've got these wonderful folks like the people we met with today who are out there telling their personal stories: what it's like when a son gets sick and you have to make sure that not only are you providing the care that they need now, but also making sure that in the future that they're going to be able to get health care because they've got a preexisting condition; knowing what it's like to be in a position where your child is transitioning from college to the workplace and maybe their first job is part-time or they're working two part-time jobs, so they're doing everything they can to be responsible, but they still can't get health care on the job.

And I think this conversation really drove home in a very personal way why this is important. Sometimes, and here in Washington, this is a very abstract conversation or an entirely political conversation. But when you boil it down to stories and people hear what it means to have the security of solid health insurance at an affordable price when you need it, it reminds me at least of why we've been fighting so hard to get this done.

And we anticipate that there's still going to be challenges over the coming months, and we're going to continue to find ways to smooth out this transition and make sure that people know what the Affordable Care Act is actually about. But we're absolutely confident that the demand is there, the need is there, and the more people learn about the fact that we've got 3 million people—young people who are able to stay on their parent's plan until they're 26; or the more they learn about the free preventive care that can avoid illness in the first place; or the more that they hear about the fact that there are no lifetime limits, so if you end up having a really severe illness you're not going to be hurt with a bunch of fine print. The more information they get I think the more satisfied they're going to be that this was the right thing to do and that it's been worth the fight.

And the last point I would just make—and I know, Michelle, you wanted to say a little bit—is what we communicated to the women here is there's something about moms—[*laughter*]—that, number one, they've got credibility generally. Number two, women oftentimes are the ones who are making the health care decisions in the family. Number three, moms can tell young people who think they're invincible that they're not and prod them to at least get information.

So as much as here in the White House we're going to continue to promote the Affordable Care Act and as much as we're going to be working hard with other organizations like AARP and others around the country to make sure people are signing up, nothing can replace the story that Mary Todd is telling in the grocery store to somebody who may be skeptical. And that kind of face-to-face interaction makes this concrete, and it describes exactly why this is so important.

So I just want to say to all the women here who have been telling their stories and working with others to make sure that people get good information, we are grateful to you. It's a great gift what you're doing, and we're really, really appreciative. So—sure.

The First Lady. Absolutely.

The President. Michelle.

The First Lady. The words that come to mind for me are "peace of mind." And what the Affordable Care Act provides and can provide for so many families out there is peace of mind. This isn't about politics, it's about making sure that every family has the peace of mind to know that if a child gets sick or someone loses a job or someone has an illness that requires hundreds of thousands of dollars in coverage, that they're going to have the safety net that they need to make sure that they don't lose their home, that they aren't spending the rest of their lives paying off medical fees.

And as Barack said, your stories are powerful. And it's our job as mothers to make sure that our young people are informed about their "invincibility," to make sure that other moms and families out there really understand what this law provides and that they can take advantage of it. This is the beauty of it. People have choices. They can go on to the website, they can talk to a navigator, they can learn for themselves what the law means and what it doesn't mean. And that's really, really what we want people to do, is educate yourselves. Get that education. Make the choice that's best for your family, because the options are there.

So we are, again, very grateful to you all. And we urge everyone out there who has a story to share it. And we urge people to reach out. And if they've signed up their child, then sign up their friends. If you've got grandkids, make it a Christmas treat around the table to talk about a little health care. [*Laughter*] Ring in the New Year with a—new coverage. [*Laughter*]

But we can really change the face of health care in this country. We can be a country that focuses on prevention. We can be a country where no one goes bankrupt because they get sick. And that is a worthwhile goal. So thank you all for being a part of this. Thanks so much.

The President. Thank you, guys.

The First Lady's Involvement in Health Care Reform

Q. Mrs. Obama, why did you want to be involved in the health care push?

The First Lady. Because I'm a mom.

The President. Thank you, guys. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the meeting were Virginia Beach, VA, resident Mary Todd Glascock; Chevy Chase, MD, resident Jeanne K. Wardford; Teaneck, NJ, resident Susan Heskins-Lazar; Arlington, VA, resident Janise Kyle; Mary Marker, volunteer, Enroll America and Organizing for Action; Neeta Datt, chapter leader, Organizing for Action in Montgomery County, MD; Felicia Willems, volunteer, MomsRising in Raleigh, NC; and Nicole Duritz, vice president of health education and outreach, AARP.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Federal Budget Legislation
December 18, 2013

I'm pleased that with tonight's vote in the Senate, for the first time in years, both parties in both Houses of Congress have come together to pass a budget. It's a budget that unwinds some of the damaging sequester cuts that have harmed students and seniors and acted as headwinds our businesses had to fight. It clears a path for critical investments in things like education and research that have always grown our economy and strengthened the middle class. And it will continue to reduce our deficits at a time when we've seen four of the fastest years of deficit reduction since the end of World War II.

All told, it's a good first step away from the shortsighted, crisis-driven decisionmaking that has only served to act as a drag on our economy. It helps chart our economic course for the next 2 years, which means that the American people won't be exposed to another painful and unwise Government shutdown. But there is much more work to do to ensure our economy works for every working American. For one, Congress should pass an extension of

unemployment insurance so more than a million Americans don't lose a vital lifeline as they fight to find a job. Today Senators Reed and Heller introduced a bipartisan solution that would prevent a lapse in benefits that would hurt these families and deal an unnecessary blow to our economy, and I urge Congress to act.

I thank Democratic and Republican leaders from the House and Senate who have worked hard to get this budget done and look forward to the Congress sending me bills that fund our Government and refrain from fighting old ideological battles. And I hope this spirit of cooperation will continue into the new year, as we work to restore opportunity and broad-based growth for every American.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.J. Res. 59.

Statement on Clemency
December 19, 2013

Three years ago, I signed the bipartisan Fair Sentencing Act, which dramatically narrowed the disparity between penalties for crack and powder cocaine offenses. This law began to right a decades-old injustice, but for thousands of inmates, it came too late. If they had been sentenced under the current law, many of them would have already served their time and paid their debt to society. Instead, because of a disparity in the law that is now recognized as unjust, they remain in prison, separated from their families and their communities, at a cost of millions of taxpayer dollars each year.

Today I am commuting the prison terms of eight men and women who were sentenced under an unfair system. Each of them has served more than 15 years in prison. In several cases, the sentencing judges expressed frustration that the law at the time did not allow them to issue punishments that more appropriately fit the crime.

Commuting the sentences of these eight Americans is an important step toward restoring fundamental ideals of justice and fairness. But it must not be the last. In the new year, lawmakers should act on the kinds of bipartisan sentencing reform measures already working their way through Congress. Together, we must ensure that our taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and that our justice system keeps its basic promise of equal treatment for all.

NOTE: The statement referred to Clarence Aaron of Mobile, AL; Stephanie Y. George of Pensacola, FL; Ezell Gilbert of Tampa, FL; Helen R. Alexander Gray of Ty Ty, GA; Jason Hernandez of McKinney, TX; Ricky E. Patterson of Fort Pierce, FL; Billy Ray Wheelock of Belton, TX; and Reynolds A. Wintersmith, Jr., of Rockford, IL.

Statement on the Situation in South Sudan
December 19, 2013

In 2011, millions of South Sudanese voted to forge a new nation, founded on the promise of a more peaceful and prosperous future for all of South Sudan's people. In recent years, against great odds, South Sudan has made great progress toward breaking the cycle of violence that characterized much of its history.

Today, that future is at risk. South Sudan stands at the precipice. Recent fighting threatens to plunge South Sudan back into the dark days of its past.

But it doesn't have to be that way. South Sudan has a choice. Its leaders can end the violence and work to resolve tensions peacefully and democratically. Fighting to settle political scores or to destabilize the Government must stop immediately. Inflammatory rhetoric and targeted violence must cease. All sides must listen to the wise counsel of their neighbors,

commit to dialogue, and take immediate steps to urge calm and support reconciliation. South Sudan's leaders must recognize that compromise with one's political enemy is difficult, but recovering from unchecked violence and unleashed hatred will prove much harder.

Too much blood has been spilled and too many lives have been lost to allow South Sudan's moment of hope and opportunity to slip from its grasp. Now is the time for South Sudan's leaders to show courage and leadership, to reaffirm their commitment to peace, to unity, and to a better future for their people. The United States will remain a steady partner of the South Sudanese people as they seek the security and prosperity they deserve.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of United States Armed Forces Personnel to South Sudan
December 19, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On December 18, 2013, approximately 45 U.S. Armed Forces personnel deployed to South Sudan to support the security of U.S. personnel and our Embassy. Although equipped for combat, this force was deployed for the purpose of protecting U.S. citizens and property. This force will remain in South Sudan until the security situation becomes such that it is no longer needed.

This action has been directed consistent with my responsibility to protect U.S. citizens both at home and abroad, and in furtherance of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148). I appreciate the support of the Congress in these actions.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

The President's News Conference
December 20, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I know you are all eager to skip town and spend some time with your families. Not surprisingly, I am too. But you know what they say: It's the most wonderful press conference of the year—[*laughter*]—right now. [*Laughter*] I am eager to take your questions, but first, I just want to say a few words about our economy.

In 2013, our businesses created another 2 million jobs, adding up to more than 8 million in just over the past 45 months. This morning we learned that over the summer, our economy grew at its strongest pace in nearly 2 years. The unemployment rate has steadily fallen to its lowest point in 5 years. Our Tax Code is fairer, and our fiscal situation is firmer, with deficits that are now less than half of what they were when I took office.

For the first time in nearly two decades, we now produce more oil here at home than we buy from the rest of the world, and our all-of-the-above strategy for new American energy means lower energy costs. The Affordable Care Act has helped keep health care costs growing at their slowest rate in 50 years. Combined, that means bigger paychecks for middle class families and bigger savings for businesses looking to invest and hire here in America.

And for all the challenges we've had and all the challenges that we've been working on

diligently in dealing with both the ACA and the website these past couple months, more than half a million Americans have enrolled through healthcare.gov in the first 3 weeks of December alone. In California, for example, a State operating its own marketplace, more than 15,000 Americans are enrolling every single day. And in the Federal website, tens of thousands are enrolling every single day. Since October 1, more than 1 million Americans have selected new health insurance plans through the Federal and State marketplaces. So all told, millions of Americans, despite the problems with the website, are now poised to be covered by quality, affordable health insurance come New Year's Day. Now, this holiday season, there are mothers and fathers and entrepreneurs and workers who have something new to celebrate: the security of knowing that when the unexpected or misfortune strikes, hardship no longer has to.

And you add that all up and what it means is, we head into next year with an economy that's stronger than it was when we started the year. More Americans are finding work and experiencing the pride of a paycheck. Our businesses are positioned for new growth and new jobs. And I firmly believe that 2014 can be a breakthrough year for America. But, and as I outlined in detail earlier this month, we all know there's a lot more that we're going to have to do to restore opportunity and broad-based growth for every American. And that's going to require some action.

It's a good start that earlier this week, for the first time in years, both parties in both Houses of Congress came together to pass a budget. That unwinds some of the damaging sequester cuts that created headwinds for our economy. It clears the path for businesses and for investments that we need to strengthen our middle class, like education and scientific research. And it means that the American people won't be exposed to the threat of another reckless shutdown every few months. So that's a good thing.

It's probably too early to declare an outbreak of bipartisanship, but it's also fair to say that we're not condemned to endless gridlock: There are areas where we can work together.

I believe that work should begin with something that Republicans in Congress should have done before leaving town this week, and that's restoring the temporary insurance that helps folks make ends meet when they are looking for a job. Because Congress didn't act, more than 1 million of their constituents will lose a vital economic lifeline at Christmas time, leaving a lot of job seekers without any source of income at all.

I think we're a better country than that. We don't abandon each other when times are tough. Keep in mind, unemployment insurance only goes to folks who are actively looking for work: a mom who needs help feeding her kids when she sends out her résumés or a dad who needs help paying the rent while working part-time and still earning the skills he needs for that new job. So when Congress comes back to work, their first order of business should be making this right. I know a bipartisan group is working on a 3-month extension of this insurance. They should pass it, and I'll sign it right away.

Let me repeat: I think 2014 needs to be a year of action. We've got work to do to create more good jobs, to help more Americans earn the skills and education they need to do those jobs, and to make sure that those jobs offer the wages and benefits that let families build a little bit of financial security. We still have the task of finishing the fix on our broken immigration system. We've got to build on the progress we've painstakingly made over these last 5 years with respect to our economy and offer the middle class and all those who are looking to join the middle class a better opportunity, and that's going to be where I focus all of my efforts in the year ahead.

And let me conclude by saying, just as we're strengthening our position here at home, we're also standing up for our interests around the world. This year, we've demonstrated that with clear-eyed, principled diplomacy, we can pursue new paths to a world that's more secure: a future where Iran does not build a nuclear weapon, a future where Syria's chemical weap-

ons stockpiles are destroyed. By the end of next year, the war in Afghanistan will be over, just as we've ended our war in Iraq, and we'll continue to bring our troops home. And as always, we will remain vigilant to protect our homeland and our personnel overseas from terrorist attacks.

Of course, a lot of our men and women in uniform are still overseas, and a lot of them are still spending their Christmas far away from their family and their friends, and in some cases, are still in harm's way. So I want to close by saying to them and their families back home, we want to thank you. Your country stands united in supporting you and being grateful for your service and your sacrifice. We will keep you in our thoughts and in our prayers during this season of hope.

So before I wish a merry Christmas to all and to all a good night, I will take some questions. Jay prepared a list of who is naughty and nice—[*laughter*]—so we'll see who made it.

Julie must be nice. [*Laughter*] Julie Pace of AP [Associated Press].

The President's Accomplishments in 2013

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Despite all of the data points that you cited in your opening statement, when you look back at this year, very little of the domestic agenda that you outlined in your Inaugural Address and your State of the Union have been achieved. Health care rollout obviously had huge problems, and your ratings from the public are near historic lows for you. When you take this all together, has this been the worst year of your Presidency?

The President. [*Laughter*] I've got to tell you, Julie, that's not how I think about it. I have now been in office 5 years—close to 5 years—was running for President for 2 years before that, and for those of you who have covered me during that time, we have had ups, and we have had downs. I think this room has probably recorded at least 15 near-death experiences. And what I've been focused on each and every day is, are we moving the ball in helping the American people, families, have more opportunity, have a little more security to feel as if, if they work hard, they can get ahead?

And if I look at this past year, there are areas where there obviously have been some frustrations, where I wish Congress had moved more aggressively. Not passing background checks in the wake of Newtown is something that I continue to believe was a mistake. But then, I also look at because of the debate that occurred, all the work that's been done at State levels to increase gun safety and to make sure that we don't see tragedies like that happen again.

There's a lot of focus on legislative activity at the congressional level, but even when Congress doesn't move on things they should move on, there are a whole bunch of things that we're still doing. So we don't always get attention for it, but the ConnectEd program that we announced, where we're going to be initiating wireless capacity in every classroom in America, will make a huge difference for kids all across this country and for teachers.

A manufacturing hub that we set up in Youngstown, and something that I talked about during the State of the Union, is going to create innovation and connect universities, manufacturers, job training, to help create a renaissance—build on the renaissance that we're seeing in manufacturing.

When it comes to energy, this year is going to be the first year in a very long time where we're producing more oil and natural gas here in this country than we're importing. That's a big deal.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. So I understand the point that you're getting at, Julie, which is that a lot of our legislative initiatives in Congress have not moved forward as rapidly as I'd like. I completely understand that, which means that I'm going to keep at it. And if you look at, for example, immigration reform, probably the biggest thing that I wanted to get done this year, we saw progress. It passed the Senate with a strong bipartisan vote. There are indications in the House that even though it did not get completed this year, that there is a commitment on the part of the Speaker to try to move forward legislation early next year. And the fact that it

didn't hit the timeline that I'd prefer is obviously frustrating, but it's not something that I end up brooding a lot about.

The President's Approval Rating/Policy Agenda

Q. But, sir, it's not just your legislative agenda. When you look at polling and you talk to Americans, they seem to have lost confidence in you, trust in you. Your credibility has taken a hit. Obviously, the health care law was a big part of that. So do you understand that those—the public has changed in some way their view of you over this year?

The President. But, Julie, I guess what I'm saying is, if you're measuring this by polls, my polls have gone up and down a lot through the course of my career. I mean, if I was interested in polling, I wouldn't have run for President. I was polling at 70 percent when I was in the U.S. Senate. I took this job to deliver for the American people. And I knew and will continue to know that there are going to be ups and downs on it.

You're right, the health care website problems were a source of great frustration. I think in the last press conference, I adequately discussed my frustrations on those. On the other hand, since that time, I now have a couple million people, maybe more, who are going to have health care on January 1. And that is a big deal. That's why I ran for this office.

And as long as I've got an opportunity every single day to make sure that in ways large and small, I'm creating greater opportunity for people—more kids are able to go to school, get the education they need; more families are able to stabilize their finances; the housing market is continuing to improve; people feel like their wages maybe are inching up a little bit—if those things are happening, I'll take it.

And I've said before, I've run my last political race. So at this point, my goal every single day is just to make sure that I can look back and say we're delivering something—not everything—because this is a long haul.

Mark Felsenthal [Reuters].

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One of the most significant events of this year was the revelation of the surveillance by the National Security Agency. As you review how to rein in the National Security Agency, a Federal judge said that, for example, the Government had failed to cite a single instance in which analysis of the NSA's bulk metadata actually stopped an imminent attack. Are you able to identify any specific examples when it did so? Are you convinced that the collection of that data is useful to national security and should continue as it is?

The President. Let me talk more broadly, and then I'll talk specifically about the program you are referring to.

As you know, the independent panel that I put together came back with a series of recommendations, 46 in total. I had an extensive meeting with them down in the Situation Room to review all the recommendations that they had made. I want to thank them publicly, because I think they did an excellent job and took my charge very seriously, which is, I told them, I want you to look from top to bottom at what we're doing and evaluate whether or not the current structures that we have and the current programs that we have are properly addressing both our continuing need to keep ourselves secure and to prevent terrorist attacks or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or other threats to the homeland? And are we also making sure that we're taking seriously rule of law and our concerns about privacy and civil liberties?

So what we're doing now is evaluating all the recommendations that have been made. Over the next several weeks, I'm going to assess based on conversations not just with the intelligence community, but others in Government and outside of Government, how we might apply and incorporate their recommendations. And I'm going to make a pretty definitive statement about all of this in January, where I'll be able to say: Here are the recommendations that we think make sense; here are ones that we think are promising, but still need to be re-

fined further; here's how it relates to the work we're doing not just internally, but also in partnership with other countries. And so I'm taking this very seriously because I think, as I've said before, this is a debate that needed to be had.

One specific program, the 215 program, is the metadata, the bulk collection of phone numbers and exchanges that have taken place, that has probably gotten the most attention, at least with respect to domestic audiences. And what I've said in the past continues to be the case, which is that the NSA, in executing this program, believed, based on experiences from 9/11, that it was important for us to be able to track if there was a phone number of a known terrorist outside of the United States calling into the United States, where that call might have gone, and that having that data in one place and retained for a certain period of time allowed them to be confident in pursuing various investigations of terrorist threats.

And I think it's important to note that in all the reviews of this program that have been done, in fact, there have not been actual instances where it's been alleged that the NSA in some ways acted inappropriately in the use of this data. But what is also clear is, from the public debate, people are concerned about the prospect, the possibility, of abuse. And I think that's what the judge and the district court suggested. And although his opinion obviously differs from rulings on the FISA Court, we're taking those into account.

The question we're going to have to ask is, can we accomplish the same goals that this program is intended to accomplish in ways that give the public more confidence that, in fact, the NSA is doing what it's supposed to be doing? I have confidence in the fact that the NSA is not engaging in domestic surveillance or snooping around, but I also recognize that as technologies change and people can start running algorithms and programs that map out all the information that we're downloading on a daily basis into our telephones and our computers, that we may have to refine this further to give people more confidence. And I'm going to be working very hard on doing that.

And we've got to provide more confidence to the international community. In some ways, what has been more challenging is the fact that we do have a lot of laws and checks and balances and safeguards and audits when it comes to making sure that the NSA and other intelligence agencies are not spying on Americans. We've had less legal constraint in terms of what we're doing internationally. But I think part of what's been interesting about this whole exercise is recognizing that in a virtual world, some of these boundaries don't matter anymore, and just because we can do something doesn't mean we necessarily should. And the values that we've got as Americans are ones that we have to be willing to apply beyond our borders, I think, perhaps more systematically than we've done in the past.

Okay? Ed Henry [Fox News].

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to follow up on that because—and merry Christmas, by the way.

The President. Merry Christmas to you.

Q. When Edward Snowden first started leaking the information, you made a statement on June 7 in California, and you claimed to the American people that you had already reformed many of these surveillance programs. You said you came into office, quote, "my team evaluated them, we scrubbed them thoroughly, we actually expanded some of the oversight," and you did expand some of it.

The President. Yes.

Q. You also said we may have to rebalance some, there may be changes. But you concluded with, quote: "You can complain about Big Brother and how this is a potential program run amok. But when you actually look at the details, then I think we've struck the right balance." That was only 6 months ago. Now this judge is saying no, your own panel is saying no, even you're saying no, we haven't really struck the right balance perhaps, that changes have to be made. My question is, were you wrong then because you were not fully read in, not just on these programs, but on other programs outside

of the ones you just talked about, where we were potentially listening in on the German leaders, the Brazilian leaders, and others, that suggest there were abuses? Number one.

And number two, if you were fully read in on these programs, is it another example of what Judy—what Julie was getting at with this question of credibility with the American people, that just like on health care, "You like your plan, you can keep it"? On surveillance, you looked the American people in the eye 6 months ago and said, "We've got the right balance," and 6 months later, you're saying maybe not.

The President. Well, hold on a second, Ed. I think it's important to note that when it comes to the right balance on surveillance, these are a series of judgment calls that we're making every single day, because we've got a whole bunch of folks whose job it is to make sure that the American people are protected. And that's a hard job, because if something slips, then the question that's coming from you the next day at a press conference is: "Mr. President, why didn't you catch that? Why did the intelligence people allow that to slip? Isn't there a way that we could have found out that in fact this terrorist attack took place?"

Q. So why were you so definitive? Why did you say we struck the right balance?

The President. So the point is, Ed, not that my assessment of the 215 program has changed in terms of technically how it works. What is absolutely clear to me is that given the public debate that's taken place and the disclosures that have taken place over the last several months, that this is only going to work if the American people have confidence and trust.

Now, part of the challenge is, is that because of the manner in which these disclosures took place, in dribs and drabs, oftentimes shaded in a particular way, and because of some of the constraints that we've had in terms of declassifying information and getting it out there, that that trust in how many safeguards exist and how these programs are run has been diminished. So what's going to be important is to build that back up. And I take that into account in weighing how we structure these programs.

So let me just be very specific on the 215 program. It is possible, for example, that some of the same information that the intelligence community feels is required to keep people safe can be obtained by having the private phone companies keep these records longer and to create some mechanism where they can be accessed in an effective fashion.

That might cost more. There might need to be different checks on how those requests are made. There may be technological solutions that have to be found to do that. And the question that we're asking ourselves now is, does that make sense not only because of the fact that there are concerns about potential abuse down the road with the metadata that's being kept by a government rather than private companies, but also, does it make sense to do it because people right now are concerned that maybe their phone calls are being listened to, even if they're not? And we've got to factor that in.

So I—my point is, is that the environment has changed in ways that I think require us to take that into account. But the analysis that I've been doing throughout has always been periodically looking at what we're doing and asking ourselves, are we doing this in the right way? Are we making sure that we're keeping the American people safe, number one? Are we also being true to our civil liberties and our privacy and our values?

Q. I understand it's a tough job, and, God forbid, there's another terror attack, every one of us is going to be second-guessing you, and that is extremely difficult to be in the Oval Office.

The President. That's okay. I volunteered.

Q. But as you said, you took that on.

The President. Yes.

Q. You put it on your back. And so my question is, do you have any personal regrets? You're not addressing the fact, the public statements you've made to reassure the public—your Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, months ago went up, got a question from a Democrat, not a Republican, about whether some of this was going on, and he de-

nied it. Doesn't that undermine the public trust?

The President. Ed, you're conflating, first of all, me and Mr. Clapper——

Q. He's the Director of National—and he's still on the job.

The President. I understand. But what I'm saying is this: that, yes, these are tough problems that I am glad to have the privilege of tackling. Your initial question was whether the statements that I made 6 months ago are ones that I don't stand by. And what I'm saying is, is that the statements I made then are entirely consistent with the statements that I make now, which is that we believed that we had scrubbed these programs and struck an appropriate balance and there had not been evidence and there continues not to be evidence that the particular program had been abused in how it was used; and that it was a useful tool, working with other tools that the intelligence community has, to ensure that if we have a thread on a potential terrorist threat, that that can be followed effectively.

What I've also said, though, is that in light of the disclosures that have taken place, it is clear that whatever benefits the configuration of this particular program may have may be outweighed by the concerns that people have on its potential abuse. And if that's the case, there may be another way of skinning the cat.

So we just keep on going at this stuff and seeing, can we do this better? Can we do this more effectively? I think that the panel's recommendations are consistent with that. So if you had a chance to read the overall recommendations, what they were very clear about is, we need this intelligence. We can't unilaterally disarm. There are ways we can do it potentially that gives people greater assurance that there are checks and balances, that there's sufficient oversight, sufficient transparency. Programs like 215 could be redesigned in ways that give you the same information when you need it without creating these potentials for abuse.

And that's exactly what we should be doing, is to evaluate all these things in a very clear, specific way and moving forward on changes. And that's what I intend to do.

Q. So you have no regrets? You have no regrets?

The President. That's what I intend to do.

Jon Karl [ABC News].

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/President's Policy Agenda

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. It's been a tough year. You may not want to call it the worst year of your Presidency, but it's clearly been a tough year. The polls have gone up and down, but they are at a low point right now. So what I'm asking you—you've acknowledged the difficulties with the health care rollout. But when you look back and you look at the decisions that you have made and what you did and what you didn't do, for you personally, what do you think has been your biggest mistake?

The President. With respect to health care, specifically, or just generally?

Q. The whole thing. Look back at this tough year.

The President. Well, there's no doubt that when it comes—when it came to the health care rollout, even though I was meeting every other week or every 3 weeks with folks and emphasizing how important it was that consumers had a good experience, an easy experience in getting the information they need and knowing what the choices and options were for them to be able to get high-quality, affordable health care. The fact is, it didn't happen in the first month, the first 6 weeks, in a way that was at all acceptable. And since I'm in charge, obviously, we screwed it up.

Part of it, as I've said before, had to do with how IT procurement generally is done, and it almost predates this year. Part of it obviously has to do with the fact that there were not clear enough lines of authority in terms of who was in charge of the technology and cracking the whip on a whole bunch of contractors. So there are a whole bunch of things that we've been taking a look at, and I'm going to be making appropriate adjustments once we get through this year and we've gotten through the initial surge of people who've been signing up.

But having said all that, the bottom line also is, is that we've got several million people who are going to have health care that works. And it's not that I don't engage in a lot of self-reflection here. I promise you, I probably beat myself up even worse than you or Ed Henry does on any given day. [*Laughter*] But I've also got to wake up in the morning and make sure that I do better the next day and that we keep moving forward.

And when I look at the landscape for next year, what I say to myself is, we're poised to do really good things. The economy is stronger than it has been in a very long time. Our next challenge then is to make sure that everybody benefits from that and not just a few folks. And there are still too many people who haven't seen a raise and are still feeling financially insecure.

We can get immigration reform done. We've got a concept that has bipartisan support. Let's see if we can break through the politics on this.

I think that, hopefully, folks have learned their lesson in terms of brinksmanship, coming out of the Government shutdown. There have been times where I thought about, were there other ways that I could have prevented that—those 3, 4 weeks that hampered the economy and hurt individual families who were not getting a paycheck during that time? Absolutely. But I also think that, in some ways, given the pattern that we had been going through with House Republicans for a while, we might have needed just a little bit of a bracing sort of recognition that this is not what the American people think is acceptable. They want us to try to solve problems and be practical, even if we can't get everything done.

So the end of the year is always a good time to reflect and see what can you do better next year. That's how I intend to approach it. I'm sure that I will have even better ideas after a couple days of sleep and sun.

Brianna [Brianna Keilar, CNN].

Federal Budget

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On the debt ceiling, your Treasury Secretary has estimated that the U.S. Government will lose its ability to pay its bills come late February or early March. House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan has said the "Republicans are going to decide what it is they can accomplish on this debt limit fight"—his words. Will you negotiate with House Republicans on the debt ceiling?

The President. Oh, Brianna, you know the answer to this question. No, we're not going to negotiate for Congress to pay bills that it has accrued.

Here's the good news: I want to emphasize the positive as we enter into this holiday season. I think Congressman Ryan and Senator Murray did a good job in trying to narrow the differences and actually pass a budget that I can sign. It's not everything that I would like, obviously. It buys back part of these across-the-board cuts, the so-called sequester, but not all of them. So we're still underfunding research, we're still underfunding education, we're still underfunding transportation and other initiatives that would create jobs right now.

But it was an honest conversation. They operated in good faith. And given how far apart the parties have been on fiscal issues, they should take pride in what they did. And I actually called them after they struck the deal, and I have said congratulations, and I hope that creates a good pattern for next year, where we work on at least the things we agree to, even if we agree to disagree on some of the other big-ticket items.

I think immigration potentially falls in that category, where let's—here's an area where we've got bipartisan agreement. There are a few differences here and there, but the truth of the matter is, is that the Senate bill has the main components of comprehensive immigration reform that would boost our economy, give us an opportunity to attract more investment and high-skilled workers who are doing great things in places like Silicon Valley and around the country. So let's go ahead and get that done.

Now, I can't imagine that having seen this possible daylight breaking when it comes to cooperation in Congress that folks are thinking

actually about plunging us back into the kinds of brinksmanship and governance by crisis that has done us so much harm over the last couple of years.

To repeat: The debt ceiling is raised simply to pay bills that we have already accrued. It is not something that is a negotiating tool. It's not leverage. It's the responsibility of Congress. It's part of doing their job. I expect them to do their job. Although I'm happy to talk to them about any of the issues that they actually want to get done. So if Congressman Ryan is interested in tax reform, let's go. I've got some proposals on it. If he's interested in any issue out there, I'm willing to have a constructive conversation of the sort that we just had in resolving the budget issues. But I've got to assume folks aren't crazy enough to start that thing all over again.

Q. If I may just quickly, on a more personal note, what is your New Year's resolution?

The President. My New Year's resolution is to be nicer to the White House Press Corps. [*Laughter*] You know? Absolutely.

Q. All right.

The President. Major Garrett [CBS News].

Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden

Q. That's quite a lead-in, Mr. President, thank you. Rick Ledgett, who is the head of the NSA Task Force on Edward Snowden, told "60 Minutes" that it was "worth having a conversation about granting Edward Snowden amnesty." To what degree, sir, were you pleased that he floated this trial balloon? And under what circumstances, would you consider either a plea agreement or amnesty for Edward Snowden? And what do you say to Americans, sir, who after possibly being alerted to Judge Leon's decision earlier this week, reading the panel recommendations, believe Edward Snowden set in motion something that is proper and just in this country about the scope of surveillance and should not be considered by this Government a criminal?

The President. I've got to be careful here, Major, because Mr. Snowden is under indictment; he's been charged with crimes. And that's the province of the Attorney General and ultimately a judge and a jury. So I can't weigh in specifically on this case at this point. I'll make—I'll try to see if I can get at the spirit of the question, even if I can't talk about the specifics.

I've said before and I believe that this is an important conversation that we needed to have. I've also said before that the way in which these disclosures happened have been damaging to the United States and damaging to our intelligence capabilities. And I think that there was a way for us to have this conversation without that damage.

I'll give you just one specific example. The fact of the matter is that the United States, for all our warts, is a country that abides by rule of law, that cares deeply about privacy, that cares about civil liberties, that cares about our Constitution. And as a consequence of these disclosures, we've got countries who actually do the things that Mr. Snowden says he's worried about very explicitly—engaging in surveillance of their own citizens, targeting political dissidents, targeting and suppressing the press—who somehow are able to sit on the sidelines and act as if it's the United States that has problems when it comes to surveillance and intelligence operations. And that's a pretty distorted view of what's going on out there.

So I think that, as important and as necessary as this debate has been, it is also important to keep in mind that this has done unnecessary damage to U.S. intelligence capabilities and U.S. diplomacy. But I will leave it up to the courts and the Attorney General to weigh in publicly on the specifics of Mr. Snowden's case.

Q. But, sir, if I could follow up, Mr. Ledgett is setting this in motion, at least raising this as a topic of conversation. You, sir, would I'm certain be consulted if there was ever going to be a conversation about amnesty or a plea bargain with Edward Snowden.

The President. I think that's true, Major, and I guess what I'm saying is there's a——

Q. Would you rule it out forever that you would never consider it?

The President. What I'm saying is, is that there's a difference between Mr. Ledgett saying something and the President of the United States saying something.

Q. That's why I'm trying to get you to answer.

The President. That's exactly right. [*Laughter*] Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and merry Christmas and happy New Year. You've talked about the issues with health care and the website rollout, but there have been other issues: the misinformation about people keeping their policies, the extended deadlines, some postponements. We have a new waiver that HHS announced last night. How do you expect Americans to have confidence and certainty in this law if you keep changing it? This one here, this new waiver last night, you could argue, you might as well have just delayed the mandate.

The President. Well, no, that's not true, because what we're talking about is a very specific population that received cancellation notices from insurance companies. The majority of them are either keeping their old plan because the grandfather clause has been extended further, or they're finding a better deal in the marketplace with better insurance for cheaper costs.

But there may still be a subset—a significantly smaller subset than some of the numbers that have been advertised—that are still looking for options, are still concerned about what they're going to be doing next year. And we just wanted to make sure that the hardship provision that was already existing in the law would also potentially apply to somebody who had problems during this transition period. So that's the specifics of this latest change.

You're making a broader point that I think is fair, and that is that in a big project like this, that what we are constantly doing is looking, is this working the way it's supposed to, and if there are adjustments that can be made to smooth out the transition, we should make them. But they don't go to the core of the law.

First of all, the core of the law is, is that for 85 percent of the population, all they've been getting is free preventive care, better consumer protections, the ability to keep their kids on their insurance plan till they're 26; $1,000 or $500 discounts on prescription drugs for seniors on Medicare. So 85 percent of the population, whether they know it or not, over the last 3 years have benefited from a whole set of the provisions of the law. And by the way, if it were to be repealed, you would be taking away all those benefits from folks who already are enjoying them.

You had this subportion of the population, 15 percent, who either don't have health insurance or are buying it on the individual market. And that's still millions of people. And what we're doing is creating a marketplace where they can buy insurance, and we can provide them some tax credits to help them afford it.

The basic structure of that law is working despite all the problems: despite the website problems, despite the messaging problems. Despite all that, it's working. And again, you don't have to take my word for it. We've got a couple million people who are going to have health insurance just in the first 3 months, despite the fact that probably the first month and a half was lost because of problems with the website and about as bad a bunch of publicity as you could imagine. And yet you've still got 2 million people who signed up or more.

And so what that means then is that the demand is there and, as I said before, the product is good. Now, in putting something like this together, there are going to be all kinds of problems that crop up, some of which may have been unanticipated. And what we've been trying to do is just respond to them in a commonsense way. And we're going to continue to try to do that. But that doesn't negate the fact that a year from now or 2 years from now, when we look back, we're going to be able to say that even more people have health insurance who didn't have it before. And that's not a bad thing, that's a good thing. That is part of the reason why I pushed so hard to get this law done in the first place.

And I've said before, this is a messy process, and I think sometimes, when I say that, people say, well, A, yes, it's real messy, and B, isn't the fact that it's been so messy some indication that there are more fundamental problems with the law? And I guess what I'd say to that, Chuck, is when you try to do something this big, affecting this many people, it's going to be hard. And every instance—whether it's Social Security, Medicare, the prescription drug plan under President Bush—there hasn't been an instance where you tried to really have an impact on the American people's lives and well-being, particularly in the health care arena, where you don't end up having some of these challenges. The question is going to be, ultimately, do we make good decisions trying to help as many people as possible in as efficient a way as possible? And I think that's what we're doing.

Q. But with 72 hours to go, you make this change, where people are buying the junk—frankly, a junk-type policy that you weren't—you were trying to get people away from.

The President. Well, keep in mind, Chuck, first of all, that the majority of folks are going to have different options. This is essentially a additional net in case folks might have slipped through the cracks. We don't have precision on those numbers, but we expect it's going to be a relatively small number, because these are folks who want insurance and the vast majority of them have good options. And in a State like North Carolina, for example, the overwhelming majority of them have just kept their own plans, so—the ones that they had previously.

But we thought and continue to think that it makes sense that as we are transitioning to a system in which insurance standards are higher, people don't have unpleasant surprises because they thought they had insurance until they hit a limit and next thing you know, they still owe $100,000 or $200,000 or $300,000 for a hospital visit, that as we transition to higher standards, better insurance, that we also address folks who get caught in that transition and there are unintended consequences.

And I'll be—that was the original intent of the grandfather clause that was in the law. Obviously, the problem was it didn't catch enough people. And we learned from that, and we're trying not to repeat those mistakes.

Q. So does the mandate need to be enforced?

The President. Absolutely. Yes.

Let's see, Phil Mattingly [Bloomberg News].

2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What was the message you were trying to send with not only your decision not to attend the Sochi Games, but also with the people you named to the delegation to represent the United States at those Games?

The President. Well, first of all, I haven't attended Olympics in the past, and I suspect that me attending the Olympics, particularly at a time when we've got all the other stuff that people have been talking about, is going to be tough, although I would love to do it. I'll be going to a lot of Olympic Games post-Presidency. [*Laughter*] I think the delegation speaks for itself. You've got outstanding Americans, outstanding athletes, people who will represent us extraordinarily well.

And the fact that we've got folks like Billie Jean King or Brian Boitano, who themselves have been world-class athletes that everybody acknowledges for their excellence, but also for their character, who also happen to be members of the LGBT community, you should take that for what it's worth: that when it comes to the Olympics and athletic performance, we don't make distinctions on the basis of sexual orientation. We judge people on how they perform, both on the court and off the court, on the field and off the field. And that's a value that I think is at the heart of not just America, but American sports.

I'm going to just roll down these last few, real quickly. Ari Shapiro [NPR]. Last day at the White House. He deserves a question. [*Laughter*]

Nomination of Senator Max S. Baucus To Be Ambassador to China

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Senator Max Baucus was widely seen as the

best hope for a large-scale deal to overhaul the Tax Code. What does your decision to nominate him as Ambassador to China say about your hopes for major tax bill in your second term?

The President. It says that Max Baucus is going to be an outstanding Ambassador to China, and I'd like a swift confirmation. And my expectation and hope is, is that if both the Senate Democrats—or if Democrats and Republicans in the House and the Senate are serious about tax reform, then it's not going to depend on one guy, it's going to depend on all of us working together. And my office is ready, willing, and eager to engage both parties and having a conversation about how we can simplify the Tax Code, make it fairer, make it work to create more jobs and do right by middle class Americans.

Jackie Calmes [New York Times].

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. And how do you say it in Hawaii? *Mele Kalikimaka*?

The President. Mele Kalikimaka. [*Laughter*]

Q. Since we've been looking back at the year, I'd like to ask you what your reaction was to the nonpartisan truth-telling group, PolitiFact, when it said that the lie of the year was your statement that if you like your health care plan, you can keep it.

And related to the health care problems that we've seen over the past year, the fallout from that seems to be making Democrats, particularly in the Senate, a little rambunctious and independent of you, which is evidenced most clearly in the debate over the Iran sanctions. It looks like Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has expedited consideration of an Iran sanctions bill for January, even as your administration—and you have been trying to get them to lay off sanctions while your——

The President. Jackie, I've got to say, you're stringing a bunch of things along here. Let's see if we can hone in on a question. I mean, I——

Q. Two questions. That's a lot less than Ed Henry had. [*Laughter*]

Q. Oh! I thought we were trying to get along for Christmas. [*Laughter*] We can get along with you, but we can't get along with each other.

The President. How about I separate out the Iran question from the health care question? On the health care question, look, I think I've answered several times—this is a new iteration of it—but bottom line is that we are going to continue to work every single day to make sure that implementation of the health care law and the website and all elements of it, including the grandfather clause, work better every single day. And as I've said in previous press conferences, we're going to make mistakes, and we're going to have problems, but my intentions have been clear throughout, which is, I just want to help as many people as possible feel secure and make sure that they don't go broke when they get sick. And we're going to just keep on doing that.

On Iran, there is the possibility of a resolution to a problem that has been a challenge for American national security for over a decade now, and that is getting Iran to, in a verifiable fashion, not pursue a nuclear weapon. Already, even with the interim deal that we struck in Geneva, we had the first halt and, in some cases, some rollback of Iran's nuclear capabilities, the first time that we've seen that in almost a decade. And we now have a structure in which we can have a very serious conversation to see, is it possible for Iran to get right with the international community in a verifiable fashion to give us all confidence that any peaceful nuclear program that they have is not going to be weaponized in a way that threatens us or allies in the region, including Israel?

And as I've said before and I will repeat, it is very important for us to test whether that's possible, not because it's guaranteed, but because the alternative is possibly us having to engage in some sort of conflict to resolve the problem, with all kinds of unintended consequences.

Now, I've been very clear from the start, I mean what I say: It is my goal to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But I sure would rather do it diplomatically. I'm keeping all options on the table, but if I can do it diplo-

matically, that's how we should do it. And I would think that would be the preference of everybody up on Capitol Hill because that sure is the preference of the American people.

And we lose nothing during this negotiation period. Precisely because there are verification provisions in place, we will have more insight into Iran's nuclear program over the next 6 months than we have previously. We'll know if they are violating the terms of the agreement. They're not allowed to accelerate or—their stockpile of enriched uranium; in fact, they have to reduce their stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

Ironically, if we did not have this 6-month period in which we're testing whether we can get a comprehensive solution to this problem, they'd be advancing even further on their nuclear program. And in light of all that, what I've said to Members of Congress—Democrats and Republicans—is there is no need for new sanctions legislation. Not yet.

Now, if Iran comes back and says, we can't give you assurances that we're not going to weaponize, if they're not willing to address some of their capabilities that we know could end up resulting in them having breakout capacity, it's not going to be hard for us to turn the dials back, strengthen sanctions even further. I'll work with Members of Congress to put even more pressure on Iran. But there's no reason to do it right now.

And so I'm not surprised that there's been some talk from some Members of Congress about new sanctions. I think the politics of trying to look tough on Iran are often good when you're running for office or if you're in office. But as President of the United States right now, who's been responsible over the last 4 years, with the help of Congress, in putting together a comprehensive sanctions regime that was specifically designed to put pressure on them and bring them to the table to negotiate, what I'm saying to them, what I've said to the international community, and what I've said to the American people is let's test it. Now is the time to try to see if we can get this thing done.

And I've heard some logic that says, well, Mr. President, we're supportive of the negotiations, but we think it's really useful to have this club hanging over Iran's head. Well, first of all, we still have the existing sanctions already in place that are resulting in Iran losing billions of dollars every month in lost oil sales. We already have banking and financial sanctions that are still being applied even as the negotiations are taking place. It's not as if we're letting up on that.

So I've heard arguments, well, but this way we can be assured, and the Iranians will know, that if negotiations fail, even new and harsher sanctions will be put into place. Listen, I don't think the Iranians have any doubt that Congress would be more than happy to pass more sanctions legislation. We can do that in a day, on a dime. But if we're serious about negotiations, we've got to create an atmosphere in which Iran is willing to move in ways that are uncomfortable for them and contrary to their ideology and rhetoric and their instincts and their suspicions of us. And we don't help get them to a position where we can actually resolve this by engaging in this kind of action. All right?

Okay, everybody, I think I'm going to take one more question. Colleen McCain Nelson [Wall Street Journal]. And that is it.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. There you are.

White House Personnel Changes

Q. Some of your longtime advisers are leaving the White House, and new folks are coming in. Others are taking on new roles in the West Wing. As you reshape your team a bit, how does that change the dynamic here? And how does it impact what you think you can accomplish going forward?

The President. I just had lunch with Pete Rouse, who is leaving me. And that's tough.

Q. He says so.

The President. He says so not right now at least. I love that guy, and that will be a significant loss, although he'll still be in town and, hopefully, I'll be able to consult with him on an ongoing basis.

I think the fact that John Podesta is coming in will be terrific. He may deny it, but I've

been trying to get him in here for quite some time. He ran my transition office. I asked him when he was running the transition office if he would be willing to join us, and at that time, I think he was still feeling that he wanted to develop CAP and other organizations. But John is a great strategist, as good as anybody on domestic policy. And I think he'll be a huge boost to us and give us more bandwidth to deal with more issues.

I suspect that we may have additional announcements in the new year. There's a natural turnover that takes place. People get tired. People get worn out. Sometimes, you need fresh legs.

But what I can tell you is that the team I have now is tireless and shares my values, and believes the thing that I think I've repeated probably four or five times in this press conference, which is, we get this incredible privilege for a pretty short period of time to do as much as we can for as many people as we can to help them live better lives. And that's what drives them. That's the sacrifice they make being away from families and soccer games and birthdays, and some of them will end up working over Christmas on issues like Iran. And the fact that they make those kinds of sacrifices I'm always grateful for. And if they then say to me after making those sacrifices for 3, 4, 5 years, I need a break, then I completely understand.

All right? Have a great holiday, everybody. Appreciate you.

Q. Merry Christmas.

The President. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:18 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney; Richard J. Leon, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia; former National Security Agency contractor Edward J. Snowden, who is accused of leaking classified documents to members of the news media; former President George W. Bush; and incoming Counselor to the President John D. Podesta. He also referred to H.J. Res. 59; and the Center for American Progress (CAP) policy think tank.

Statement on the Prevention of Sexual Assault in the United States Armed Forces

December 20, 2013

Earlier this year, I directed Secretary Hagel, Chairman Dempsey, and our entire defense leadership team to step up their game exponentially in preventing and responding to the serious crime of sexual assault in our military. As Commander in Chief, I've made it clear that these crimes have no place in the greatest military on Earth. Since then, our Armed Forces have moved ahead with a broad range of initiatives, including reforms to the military justice system, improving and expanding prevention programs, and enhancing support for victims. I commend the Pentagon leadership for their hard work on this critical issue of vital importance to our Nation.

Yet, so long as our women and men in uniform face the insider threat of sexual assault, we have an urgent obligation to do more to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes, as appropriate under the military justice system. Members of Congress, especially Senators Gillibrand and McCaskill, have rightly called attention to the urgency of eradicating this scourge from our Armed Forces. As a result, there were a broad range of reforms proposed in this year's National Defense Authorization Act. The White House and the Department of Defense and other relevant agencies in my administration will continue to work with Congress to address this corrosive problem, which is a violation of the values our Armed Forces stand for, destroys trust among our troops, and undermines our readiness.

Today I instructed Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey to continue their efforts to make substantial improvements with respect to sexual assault prevention and response, including to the military justice system. I have also directed that they report back to me, with a full-scale review of their progress, by December 1, 2014. If I do not see the kind of progress I expect, then we will consider additional reforms that may be required to eliminate this crime from our military ranks and protect our brave servicemembers who stand guard for us every day at home and around the world.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John A. Koskinen as Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service
December 20, 2013

I applaud the bipartisan majority of Senators who today confirmed John Koskinen as the next Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service. John has decades of private and public sector experience, and he has led institutions in challenging times. Throughout his career, John has always acted with the absolute integrity Americans demand from those in public service, and his strong leadership and unquestioned expertise make him the right person to lead the IRS. I want to thank Daniel Werfel for his outstanding service as Principal Deputy Commissioner of the IRS, and I look forward to working with John as he takes on this new role.

The President's Weekly Address
December 21, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, Congress finished up some important work before heading home for the holidays.

For the first time in years, both parties came together in the spirit of compromise to pass a budget, one that helps chart our economic course for the next 2 years. This budget will unwind some of the damaging cuts that have threatened students and seniors and held back our businesses. It clears the path for critical investments in the things that grow our economy and strengthen our middle class, like education and research. And it will keep reducing our deficits, at a time when we've seen 4 years of the fastest deficit reduction since the end of World War II.

Members of Congress also voted to finally allow several dedicated and well-qualified public servants to do their jobs for the American people, many of whom waited months for a simple yes-or-no vote. These are judges, Cabinet Secretaries, and military leaders. They're men and women charged with growing our economy, keeping our homeland secure, and making sure our housing system and financial system work for ordinary Americans.

So after a year of showdowns and obstruction that only held back our economy, we've been able to break the logjam a bit over the last few weeks. It's a hopeful sign that we can end the cycle of shortsighted, crisis-driven decisionmaking and actually work together to get things done. And that's important because there's plenty of work to do.

Right now, because Congress failed to act before leaving on vacation, more than 1 million Americans are poised to lose a vital source of income just a few days after Christmas. For many people who are still looking for work, unemployment insurance is a lifeline that can make the difference between temporary hardship or lasting catastrophe. Instead of punishing these families who can least afford it—especially now—Congress should first restore that lifeline immediately, then put our entire focus on creating more good jobs that pay good wages.

That's what I'll be focused on next year and every day I have the privilege of being your President: growing the economy, expanding

opportunity, building an America that offers everyone who works hard the chance to get ahead and every child a fair shot at success.

And if Congress continues to act in the spirit of cooperation we've seen in recent weeks, I'm confident we can make much more progress together in the year to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend and a very merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:30 p.m. on December 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 21. In the address, the President referred to H.J. Res. 59. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 21.

Statement on the Death of John S.D. Eisenhower
December 22, 2013

Michelle and I send our condolences to the Eisenhower family on the passing of John S.D. Eisenhower. He grew up the son of an American hero, but emerged a great American in his own right: a brave soldier who served in World War II, the Korean war, and ultimately retired with the rank of Brigadier General; an accomplished writer and historian; a talented diplomat. His was a big and quintessentially American life, one of patriotism and character, learning and teaching, and a deep and abiding sense of service to his country. Our thoughts and prayers are with John's wife Joanne, his son David, his daughters Barbara Anne, Susan, and Mary, and his grandchildren, along with our gratitude for his extraordinary life.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of United States Armed Forces Personnel to South Sudan
December 22, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In my report to the Congress of December 19, 2013, I provided information on the deployment of U.S. forces to support the security of U.S. personnel and our Embassy in South Sudan. I am providing this additional report, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on U.S. military activities in South Sudan.

On December 21, 2013, approximately 46 additional U.S. military personnel deployed by military aircraft to the area of Bor, South Sudan, to conduct an operation to evacuate U.S. citizens and personnel. After the aircraft came under fire as they approached Bor, the operation was curtailed due to security considerations, and the aircraft and all military personnel onboard departed South Sudan without completing the evacuation.

The purpose of this operation was to protect U.S. citizens, personnel, and property. As I monitor the situation in South Sudan, I may take further action to support the security of U.S. citizens, personnel, and property, including our Embassy, in South Sudan.

This action has been directed consistent with my responsibility to protect U.S. citizens both at home and abroad, and in furtherance of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I appreciate the support of the Congress in these actions.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Designation of Curaçao as a Beneficiary Country for Purposes of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act
December 23, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 212 of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) (19 U.S.C. 2702), as amended by the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) (Public Law 106–200), and after considering the criteria set forth in sections 212(b) and (c) and 213(b)(5)(B) of the CBERA (19 U.S.C. 2702(b) and (c) and 19 U.S.C. 2703(b)(5)(B)), I have determined that it is appropriate to designate Curaçao, which is a successor political entity to The Netherlands Antilles, as a beneficiary country for the purposes of the CBERA and CBTPA.

In accordance with section 212(a)(1)(A) of the CBERA, I am hereby notifying the Congress of my intent to designate Curaçao as a beneficiary country for the purposes of the CBERA and CBTPA. After the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) makes a determination under section 213(b)(4)(A)(ii) (19 U.S.C. 2703(b)(4)(A)(ii)) regarding whether Curaçao has implemented and follows or is making substantial progress toward implementing and following the customs procedures required under the CBTPA, and publishes such determination in the *Federal Register*, Curaçao will be eligible for benefits under the CBTPA on the date that the USTR designates.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The related Proclamation 9072 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
December 25, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody, and happy holidays.

The First Lady. We know how busy this time of year is for everyone, so we're not going to take much of your time. But we did want to take a moment to wish you all a merry Christmas, from our family to yours.

The President. This is a season for millions of Americans to be together with family, to continue long-held holiday traditions, and to show our gratitude to those we love. And along the way, some of us might even watch a little basketball or eat some Christmas cookies too.

The First Lady. Here at the White House, over the past few weeks, we've had about 70,000 people from all across the country come visit and look at our holiday decorations. This year's theme was "Gather Around: Stories of the Season." And in every room of the house, we tried to tell the story about who we are as Americans and how we celebrate the holidays together.

And we made certain to highlight some of the most powerful stories we know: the stories of our outstanding troops, veterans, and military families and their service and sacrifice for our country.

The President. Our extraordinary men and women in uniform are serving so that the rest of us can enjoy the blessings we cherish during the holidays. But that means many of our troops are far from home and far from family.

They're spending some extra time on the phone with their loved ones back home. Or they're setting up video chats so they can watch as the presents are opened. So today we want all our troops to know that you're in our thoughts and prayers this holiday season.

And here's the good news: For many of our troops and newest veterans, this might be the first time in years that they've been with their families on Christmas. In fact, with the Iraq war over and the transition in Afghanistan, fewer of our men and women in uniform are deployed in harm's way than at any time in the last decade.

The First Lady. And that's something that we all can be thankful for. And with more and more of our troops back here at home, now it's our turn to serve. It's our turn to step up and show our gratitude for the military families who have given us so much.

And that's why Jill Biden and I started our Joining Forces initiative, to rally all Americans to support our military families in ways large and small. And again and again, we have been overwhelmed by the response we've gotten, as folks from across the country have found new ways to give back to these families through their schools, businesses, and houses of worship.

The President. That's the same spirit of giving that connects all of us during the holidays. So many people all across the country are helping out at soup kitchens, buying gifts for children in need, or organizing food or clothing drives for their neighbors. For families like ours, that service is a chance to celebrate the birth of Christ and live out what He taught us: to love our neighbors as we would ourselves, to feed the hungry and look after the sick, to be our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper. And for all of us as Americans, regardless of our faith, those are values that can drive us to be better parents and friends, better neighbors, and better citizens.

The First Lady. So as we look to the new year, let's pledge ourselves to living out those values by reaching out and lifting up those in our communities who could use a hand up.

The President. So merry Christmas, everyone. And from the two of us, as well as Malia, Sasha, Grandma, Bo——

The First Lady. And Sunny, the newest Obama.

The President. ——we wish you all a blessed and safe holiday season.

The First Lady. Happy holidays everybody, and God bless.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:30 p.m. on December 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 25. In the address, the President referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The First Lady referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 25.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014

December 26, 2013

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3304, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014." I have signed this annual defense authorization legislation because it will provide pay and bonuses for our service members, enhance counterterrorism initiatives abroad, build the security capacity of key partners, and expand efforts to prevent sexual assault and strengthen protections for victims.

Since taking office, I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to work with my Administration to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The continued operation of the facility weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists.

For the past several years, the Congress has enacted unwarranted and burdensome restric-

tions that have impeded my ability to transfer detainees from Guantanamo. Earlier this year I again called upon the Congress to lift these restrictions and, in this bill, the Congress has taken a positive step in that direction. Section 1035 of this Act gives the Administration additional flexibility to transfer detainees abroad by easing rigid restrictions that have hindered negotiations with foreign countries and interfered with executive branch determinations about how and where to transfer detainees. Section 1035 does not, however, eliminate all of the unwarranted limitations on foreign transfers and, in certain circumstances, would violate constitutional separation of powers principles. The executive branch must have the flexibility, among other things, to act swiftly in conducting negotiations with foreign countries regarding the circumstances of detainee transfers. Of course, even in the absence of any statutory restrictions, my Administration would transfer a detainee only if the threat the detainee may pose can be sufficiently mitigated and only when consistent with our humane treatment policy. Section 1035 nevertheless represents an improvement over current law and is a welcome step toward closing the facility.

In contrast, sections 1033 and 1034 continue unwise funding restrictions that curtail options available to the executive branch. Section 1033 renews the bar against using appropriated funds to construct or modify any facility in the United States, its territories, or possessions to house any Guantanamo detainee in the custody or under the control of the Department of Defense unless authorized by the Congress. Section 1034 renews the bar against using appropriated funds to transfer Guantanamo detainees into the United States for any purpose. I oppose these provisions, as I have in years past, and will continue to work with the Congress to remove these restrictions. The executive branch must have the authority to determine when and where to prosecute Guantanamo detainees, based on the facts and circumstances of each case and our national security interests. For decades, Republican and Democratic administrations have successfully prosecuted hundreds of terrorists in Federal court. Those prosecutions are a legitimate, effective, and powerful tool in our efforts to protect the Nation. Removing that tool from the executive branch does not serve our national security interests. Moreover, section 1034 would, under certain circumstances, violate constitutional separation of powers principles.

The detention facility at Guantanamo continues to impose significant costs on the American people. I am encouraged that this Act provides the Executive greater flexibility to transfer Guantanamo detainees abroad, and look forward to working with the Congress to take the additional steps needed to close the facility. In the event that the restrictions on the transfer of Guantanamo detainees in sections 1034 and 1035 operate in a manner that violates constitutional separation of powers principles, my Administration will implement them in a manner that avoids the constitutional conflict.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
December 26, 2013.

NOTE: H.R. 3304, approved December 26, was assigned Public Law No. 113–66.

Statement on the Observance of Kwanzaa
December 26, 2013

Michelle and I extend our best wishes to all those celebrating Kwanzaa this holiday season. Today marks the beginning of the week-long celebration of African American culture through family activities and community festivities that bring attention to Kwanzaa's seven principles of unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Though each principle represents the essence of this holiday, they also represent the shared values that bind us as Americans.

As families and communities across our country come together today to light the *kinara*, our family sends our hopes for a prosperous and healthy new year.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

July 1

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, arriving in the afternoon. While en route, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia to congratulate him on his return to office and discuss Australia-U.S. relations. Then, he had a telephone conversation with former Prime Minister Julia E. Gillard to thank her for her work as Prime Minister and wish her well in future endeavors.

Also while en route, the President received an intelligence briefing from Deputy National Security Adviser Antony J. Blinken.

In the afternoon, upon arrival at Julius Nyere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, Tanazania, the President participated in an arrival ceremony with President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania. Later, at the State House, he and Mrs. Obama participated in an arrival ceremony with President Kikwete and his wife Salma Kikwete.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Janice K. Brewer of Arizona to receive an update on the wildfires affecting her State and offer his condolences to the families of the 19 firefighters who lost their lives in the fire.

Also during the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Muhammad Mursi of Egypt to express his concerns about the recent political demonstrations and violence in Egypt and encourage President Mursi to resolve the crisis through the political process.

July 2

In the morning, at the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the President visited with Embassy personnel and their families. Then, he and former President George W. Bush participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial for the 1998 Embassy bombing. Later, they met with survivors and family members of the victims of the bombing.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Dakar, Senegal. Then, they returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from May 19 through June 14.

July 3

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the surveillance activities allegedly conducted by the National Security Agency. Chancellor Merkel also offered her condolences to the families of the 19 firefighters who lost their lives in the wildfires in Arizona.

Also during the day, in the Situation Room, the President met with his national security team to discuss the situation in Egypt.

July 5

In the morning, the President traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

July 6

During the day, the President had a conference call with his National Security Council to discuss the situation in Egypt.

Also during the day, the President received an update from Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the crash landing of Asiana Airlines Flight 214 in San Francisco, CA.

July 7

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

July 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he had a Cabinet meeting. Vice President Biden also attended. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Marilyn B. Tavenner, White House staff members, and leaders from the health and technology fields to discuss the role of data and innovation in improving the cost and quality of health care.

The White House announced that the President will award the 2012 National Medal of Arts and the National Humanities Medal on July 10.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Tsakhia Elbegdorj as President of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on July 10: Piper A.W. Campbell (head of delegation); and Tomicah Tillemann.

The President announced his intention to nominate Wanda F. Felton to be First Vice President of the U.S. Export-Import Bank.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis V. McGinn to be Assistant Secretary for Energy, Installations, and Environment at the Department of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tomasz P. Malinowski to be Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Evan Ryan to be Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark B. Childress to be Ambassador to Tanzania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carlos R. Moreno to be Ambassador to Belize.

The President announced his intention to appoint Anthony T. Pierce as a member of the District of Columbia Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure.

July 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President dropped by the Kids' State Dinner for the winners of the 2013 Healthy Lunchtime Challenge. Later, in the Oval Office, he had separate telephone conversations with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the United Arab Emirates, and Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to discuss the situation in Egypt and U.S. relations with their respective countries. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

Later in the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Margaret L. Cummisky to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael K. Yudin to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew W. Barzun to be Ambassador to Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Hoover to be Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

The President announced his intention to nominate Crystal Nix-Hines to be U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ed-

ucational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate John R. Phillips to be Ambassador to Italy and San Marino.

July 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in Room 350 of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he and Vice President Biden met with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The White House announced that the President will host the 5,000th Daily Point of Light Award ceremony with former President George H.W. Bush at the White House on July 15.

The President declared a major disaster in Montana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by flooding from May 19 through June 3.

July 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Sens. John S. McCain III and Charles E. Schumer to discuss immigration reform.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the 1963 Loyola University of Chicago Ramblers championship basketball team to honor the 50th anniversary of their championship title and acknowledge their role in breaking down racial barriers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with the cochairs of the Chinese delegation to the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, Vice Premier Wang Yang and State Councilor Yang Jiechi.

In the evening, at the Jefferson Hotel, the President attended a Democratic National Committee event.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Truong Tan Sang of Vietnam to the White House on July 25.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Antonios Samaras of Greece to the White House on August 8.

The President announced the nomination of William W. Nooter to be a judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

July 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss Russian-U.S. relations, counterterrorism cooperation, and the status of former National Security Agency contractor Edward J. Snowden. He also had a telephone conversation with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to express his warm wishes on the occasion of Ramadan, Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations, and the situation in Syria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gregory D. Winfree to be Administrator of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rhonda S. Schmidtlein to be a member of the U.S. International Trade Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Angelique M. Crumbly as Assistant Administrator for Management at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint John B. Nathman as a member of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Naval Academy.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rion J. Ramirez as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the

area affected by severe storms and flooding from May 17 through June 16.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from June 28 through July 4.

July 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Red Room, the President and Mrs. Obama had lunch with former President George H.W. Bush, former First Lady Barbara Bush, and members of the Bush family.

July 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Blue Room, he recorded separate interviews with Spanish language news anchors from the Dallas, TX, Denver, CO, Los Angeles, CA, and New York City media markets.

In the afternoon, the President met with Sens. A. Lamar Alexander, Richard M. Burr, Thomas A. Coburn, Thomas R. Harkin, Joseph Manchin III, and Angus S. King, Jr., to discuss Federal student loan rates.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the NCAA Champion University of Louisville Cardinals to the White House on July 23.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kent Y. Hirozawa and Nancy J. Schiffer to be members of the National Labor Relations Board.

July 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will deliver remarks on the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act at the White House on July 18.

July 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss the situations in Egypt, Iran, and Syria, peace efforts with the Palestinians, and Israel-U.S. security cooperation.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carolyn Hessler-Radelet to be Director of the Peace Corps.

The President announced his intention to nominate Beth Robinson to be Under Secretary for Energy at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jessica Garfola Wright to be Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nisha Desai Biswal to be Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julia Frifield to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Frank A. Rose to be Assistant Secretary for Verification and Compliance at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scott S. Dahl to be Inspector General of the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Timothy M. Broas to be U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands.

The President announced his intention to nominate Adam M. Scheinman to be Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation, with the rank of Ambassador, at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Pius Pietrzyk to be a member of

the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation.

July 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, in the East Room, he and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception for the foreign diplomatic corps.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding from May 29 through June 10.

July 21

The White House announced that the President will travel to Galesburg, IL, and Warrensburg, MO, on July 24.

July 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Jacksonville, FL, on July 25.

The White House announced that the President will deliver remarks at the Korean War Veterans Memorial to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Korean war armistice on July 27.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to South Korea to attend ceremonies commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Korean war armistice in Seoul, South Korea, on July 27:

Sung Y. Kim (head of delegation);
James D. Thurman;
James P. Zumwalt;
David F. Helvey; and
David R. Stilwell.

July 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus to discuss issues affecting the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Director of Speechwriting Cody S. Keenan.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2012 World Series Champion San Francisco Giants to the White House on July 29.

July 24

In the morning, the President traveled to Galesburg, IL, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Warrensburg, MO.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marcel J. Lettre II to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. Simon to be Associate Director for Energy and Environment at the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Caroline Bouvier Kennedy to be Ambassador to Japan.

The President announced his intention to appoint Betty S. Sutton as Administrator of the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

July 25

In the morning, the President traveled to Jacksonville, FL, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he met with Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx.

In the afternoon, the President and Secretary Foxx toured the TraPac Berth 16 facility at JAXPORT's Dames Point Marine Terminal with JAXPORT Interim Chief Executive Officer Roy A. Schleicher, TraPac, Inc., Regional

Vice President and General Manager Dennis F. Kelly, and International Longshoremen's Association Local 1408 Representative Fred D. Wakefield. Later, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2013 NCAA women's basketball champion University of Connecticut Huskies to the White House on July 31.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tony Hammond to be a Commissioner on the Postal Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald Lu to be Ambassador to Albania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert A. Sherman to be Ambassador to Portugal.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leslie E. Bains to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation.

The President announced the nomination of Vince G. Chhabria to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The President announced the nomination of the following individuals to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan:

Matthew F. Leitman;
Judith E. Levy;
Laurie J. Michelson; and
Linda V. Parker.

The President announced the nomination of James M. Moody, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas.

The President declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding from June 20 through 26.

July 26

In the morning, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Chattanooga, TN, on July 30.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor to S. Sgt. Ty M. Carter, USA, on August 26.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding on June 13.

The President declared a major disaster in Colorado and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by the Royal Gorge Fire from June 11 through 16.

The President declared a major disaster in Colorado and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by the Black Forest Fire from June 11 through 21.

July 27

In the morning, at the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the President participated in a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Korean war armistice.

July 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with senior advisers.

In the afternoon, on the patio outside the Oval Office, the President had lunch with former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez, civil rights leaders, and State and local officials to discuss strengthening voting rights.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, President Dalia Grybauskaite of Lithuania, and President Andris Berzins of Latvia to the White House on August 30.

July 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Minister of Justice Tzipora "Tzipi" Livni and Yitzhak Molcho of Israel and Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat and Mohammed Shtayyeh of the Palestinian Authority to discuss the resumption of direct Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry, National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations Martin S. Indyk, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East Philip H. Gordon also attended. Later, the President traveled to Chattanooga, TN, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Amazon Fulfillment Center, where he toured the facility, met with employees, and participated in an interview with Amazon Kindle Singles editor David Blum. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The President announced his intention to nominate L. Paige Marvel to be a judge on the U.S. Tax Court.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth L. Mossman to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth R. Weinstein to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael L. Connor to be Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert O. Blake, Jr., to be Ambassador to Indonesia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas F. Daughton to be Ambassador to Namibia.

The President announced his intention to nominate John L. Estrada to be Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip S. Goldberg to be Ambassador to the Philippines.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael S. Hoza to be Ambassador to Camaroon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Noah B. Mamet to be Ambassador to Argentina.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eunice S. Reddick to be Ambassador to Niger.

July 31

In the morning, at the U.S. Capitol, the President met separately with the House Democratic Caucus and the Senate Democratic Caucus.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The President announced his intention to nominate France A. Cordova to be Director of the National Science Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sarah Bloom Raskin to be Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sylvia I. Garcia to be Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jo E. Handelsman to be Associate Director for Science at the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gregory B. Starr to be Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karen C. Stanton to be Ambassador to Timor-Leste.

The President announced his intention to nominate Amy J. Hyatt to be Ambassador to Palau.

August 1

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe

Biden had lunch. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Members of Congress to discuss programs conducted under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Later, in the East Room, he hosted a reception honoring the 50th anniversary of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority to discuss the Middle East peace process and commend their leadership in resuming final status negotiations.

The President announced his intention to nominate John A. Koskinen to be Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah Lee James to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Christopher Giancarlo to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael P. O'Rielly to be a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick Pizzella to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. Gil Kerlikowske to be Commissioner of Customs at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Frank G. Klotz to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sarah Sewall to be Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Suzanne E. Spaulding to be Under Secretary for National Protection Programs at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathryn D. Sullivan to be Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karen Dynan to be Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter J. Kadzik to be Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne W. Patterson to be Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Linda A. Spoonster Schwartz to be Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stevan E. Bunnell to be General Counsel at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven Croley to be General Counsel at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard F. Griffin to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah A.P. Hersman to be a member and Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher A. Hart to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dwight L. Bush, Sr., to be Ambassador to Morocco.

The President announced his intention to nominate Pamela K. Hamamoto to be U.S. Representative to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew T. Harrington to be Ambassador to Lesotho.

The President announced the nomination of Michelle T. Friedland and John B. Owens to be judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The President announced the nomination of Nancy L. Moritz to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

The President announced the nomination of Gary L. Blankinship to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Texas.

The President announced the nomination of Robert L. Hobbs to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Texas.

The President announced the nomination of Amos Rojas, Jr., to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Florida.

The President announced the nomination of Peter C. Tobin to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Ohio.

The President announced the nomination of Christopher R. Cooper to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The President announced the nomination of Daniel D. Crabtree to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas.

The President announced the nomination of M. Douglas Harpool to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri.

The President announced the nomination of Sheryl H. Lipman to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee.

The President announced the nomination of Gerald A. McHugh, Jr., and Edward G. Smith to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from June 21 through 28.

August 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Phoenix, AZ, on August 6.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by an explosion from April 17 through 20.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from June 19 through 29.

The President declared a major disaster in Florida and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from July 2 through 7.

The President declared a major disaster in New Hampshire and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, and landslides from June 26 through July 3.

The President declared a major disaster in Vermont and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from June 25 through July 11.

August 3

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD. Later, he received a briefing from National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on preparedness efforts in response to indications that the Al Qaida terrorist organization or its affiliates were planning to attack U.S. citizens or installations, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, or South Asia.

August 4

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Los Angeles, CA, on August 6 and 7.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Camp Pendleton, CA, on August 7.

August 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with senior advisers.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President met with former Negro League baseball players.

August 6

In the morning, the President traveled to Chandler, AZ, arriving in afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan traveled to Erickson Construction, where they toured the facilities. Then, he traveled to Phoenix, AZ.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Burbank, CA. Later, he traveled to Los Angeles, CA.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Hilton Woodland Hills hotel, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Orlando, FL, on August 10.

August 7

In the morning, the President traveled to Camp Pendleton, CA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss the situations in Syria and Egypt and offer Prime Minister Erdogan and the Turkish people his best wishes on the beginning of the Ramazan Bayrami holiday.

Also during the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to express his support following the fire at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi and commemorate the 15th anniversary of the terrorist bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

The White House announced that the President will deliver remarks at the Lincoln Memorial as part of the "Let Freedom Ring" ceremony to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Stockholm, Sweden, on September 4 and 5.

The White House announced that the President will travel to St. Petersburg, Russia, to attend the Group of Twenty (G–20) summit on September 5 and 6.

August 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will travel to Martha's Vineyard, MA, on August 10.

The President announced his intention to appoint Alfred Valenzuela, Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV, and Libby H. O'Connell as members of the World War I Centennial Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mark Hertling and Anthony M. Robles as members of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition.

The President announced his intention to appoint Matrice Ellis-Kirk as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President announced his intention to appoint Bruce Cole as a member of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission.

The President declared a major disaster in Wisconsin and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, and mudslides from June 20 through 28.

August 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration

of Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara as President of Paraguay in Asuncion, Paraguay, on August 15:

Ernest J. Moniz (head of delegation);
James H. Thessin;
Miriam Sapiro; and
Francisco J. Sánchez.

August 10

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Orlando, FL.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Martha's Vineyard, MA, where, upon arrival, they traveled to their vacation residence in Chilmark, MA.

August 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to appoint Carla A. Harris as Chairperson of the National Women's Business Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint S. Fitzgerald Haney and Beth Heifetz as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

August 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Nancy's Restaurant & Snack Bar in Oak Bluffs, MA, where he bought lunch and visited with staff and patrons.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 1973 Super Bowl Champion Miami Dolphins to the White House on August 20 to honor them for their historic undefeated 1972 season.

August 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

August 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a conference call briefing with his national security team to discuss the situation in Egypt and Egypt-U.S. relations.

August 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and also received an update on the situation in Egypt.

August 17

Over the weekend, the President had a telephone conversation with Vice President Joe Biden to discuss the health of the Vice President's son Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III.

The White House announced that the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha will return to Washington, DC, on August 18.

August 18

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC.

August 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Comptroller of the Currency Thomas J. Curry, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director Richard A. Cordray, Federal Housing Finance Agency Acting Director Edward J. DeMarco, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke, Commodity Futures Trading Commission Chairman Gary S. Gensler, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Chairman Martin J. Gruenberg, National Credit Union Administration Board Chairman Deborah Matz, Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Mary Jo White, Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew, and senior advisers to discuss strengthening the financial system, implementation of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, housing reform, interagency coordination, and the Federal budget.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor to S. Sgt. Ty M. Carter, USA, on August 26.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Buffalo, NY, and Syracuse, NY, on August 22.

August 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry, Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel, and other members of his national security team to discuss the situation in Egypt.

During the day, the President received a briefing on the wildfires affecting Western States.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Binghamton, NY, on August 23.

The White House announced that the President and Vice President Joe Biden will travel to Scranton, PA, on August 23.

August 21

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President had a video teleconference with directors of State-based health insurance exchanges, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, and other administration officials to discuss implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

August 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Buffalo, NY.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Rochester, NY, where, at Magnolia's Deli and Cafe, he and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan had lunch and participated in a roundtable discussion on college affordability with a group of students and parents. Then, he traveled to Seneca Falls, NY, where he toured the Women's Rights National Historical Park Visitor Center, greeted park visitors and staff, and presented the center with a copy of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 and a signed copy of his remarks delivered at the bill signing ceremony. Later, he traveled to Syracuse, NY.

Also in the afternoon, the President was briefed by White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough on the disruption of the NASDAQ stock exchange resulting from a computer malfunction.

In the evening, at Henninger High School in Syracuse, NY, the President recorded an interview with Chris Cuomo of CNN's "New Day" program for later broadcast. Later, he traveled to Auburn, NY, where he remained overnight.

August 23

In the morning, the President traveled to Binghamton, NY, arriving in the afternoon. While en route, he stopped at Tully Central High School in Tully, NY, where he greeted members of the girls' and boys' soccer teams.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Scranton, PA. While en route, he stopped at Bingham's Family Restaurant in Lenox, PA, where, joined by Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr., he greeted patrons and employees and purchased pies. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

August 24

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President met with the National Security Council to discuss the reported use of chemical weapons near Damascus, Syria, by the Syrian Government on August 21 and review options for a response. Then, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons, and options for a response by the international community.

August 25

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a response by the international community.

Also during the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California to receive an update on the wildfires in California, express his gratitude for firefighters and first responders, and reiterate his commitment to providing Federal support for ongoing State and local response efforts.

August 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an in-

telligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with African American religious leaders to discuss the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and how civil rights and equality affect education, employment, health care, and voting.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the 2013 Urban Debate National Tournament champions. Then, also in the Oval Office, he recorded separate interviews with Tom Joyner and Sybil Wilkes of the "Tom Joyner Morning Show" and Yolanda Adams of "The Yolanda Adams Morning Show."

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a response by the international community.

August 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., met with mayors from around the country to discuss efforts to reduce youth violence.

In the evening, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a response by the international community.

August 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Ambassador Donald E. Booth, U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan.

In the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President recorded an interview with Gwen Ifill and Judy Woodruff of PBS's "NewsHour" program for later broadcast. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a U.S. response.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a U.S. response.

August 29

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a response by the international community.

The President announced his intention to appoint Milford W. Donaldson as Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Clement A. Price as Vice Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Harry P. Hallock and Tom Robinson as members of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

The President declared a major disaster for the Karuk Tribe and ordered Federal aid to supplement tribal efforts in the area affected by a wildfire from July 29 through August 2.

August 30

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President met with his national security team to discuss the situation in Syria.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and

options for a response by the international community.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers to discuss the situation in Syria.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the continued violence in Syria, the reported use of chemical weapons by its Government on August 21, and options for a response by the international community.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gerd F. Glang as Commissioner of the Mississippi River Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Lynnae M. Ruttledge as a member of the Commission on Long-Term Care.

The President announced his intention to appoint James J. Zogby as a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

August 31

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss the situation in Syria.

September 2

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. John S. McCain III to discuss the situation in Syria.

In the evening the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to discuss the use of chemical weapons in Syria and Japan-U.S. relations.

September 3

In the morning, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Members of Congress to discuss the situation in Syria.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dinning Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

In the evening, the President traveled to Stockholm, Sweden, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to appoint Huban A. Gowadia as Director of the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to appoint Geoffrey L. Haskett as a Commissioner of the U.S. Section of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gary Frazer as an Alternate Commissioner of the U.S. Section of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission.

The President announced the appointment of Douglas Frantz as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of State.

September 4

In the morning, at the Stockholm Arlanda Airport, the President participated in an arrival ceremony with Deputy Prime Minister Jan Bjorklund of Sweden, other Swedish Cabinet members, and U.S. Ambassador to Sweden Mark F. Brzezinski and his wife Natalia. Then, he traveled to the Grand Hotel in Stockholm.

In the afternoon, the President visited the KTH Royal Institute of Technology campus library, where he and Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt toured a renewable energy research exposition. Then, he returned to the Grand Hotel.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Sager House, official residence of the Prime Minister, where he had dinner and participated in a family photo with Prime Minister Reinfeldt, President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt of Denmark, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, and Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson of Iceland. Later, he returned to the Grand Hotel, where he remained overnight.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from August 8 through 14.

September 5

In the morning, the President traveled to the Royal Palace in Stockholm, where he met

with King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden. Later, he traveled to Saint Petersburg, Russia, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Constantine Palace complex in St. Petersburg, where he participated in an official arrival ceremony with Group of Twenty (G–20) leaders. Then, he attended a G–20 working session.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Grand Peterhof Palace, where he had a working dinner with G–20 leaders. Later, he returned to the Constantine Palace complex, where he remained overnight.

September 6

In the afternoon, in the Constantine Palace-Marble Hall, the President participated in a second G–20 working session on investing in growth and job creation. On the margins of the session, he met with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the situation in Syria. Then, he participated in a photo opportunity with G–20 leaders. Later, he had a working lunch with G–20 leaders.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Crowne Plaza St. Petersburg Airport hotel. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait to the White House on September 13.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gina S. Farrisee as Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Megan H. Mack as an Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to appoint Melissa Savage and C. Kenneth Smith as members of the Board of Directors of the Valles Caldera Trust.

The President announced his intention to appoint David Sanders as Chairman of the Commission To Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Commission To Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities:

Theresa M. Covington;
Patricia M. Martin;
Michael R. Petit;
Jennifer Rodriguez; and
David Rubin.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rosemary A. Joyce as a member of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to appoint Alice T. Germond and Azita Raji as members of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding from August 2 through 14.

September 7

In the afternoon, the President received an update from White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough on the administration's ongoing consultations with Members of Congress on the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Over the weekend, the President had separate telephone conversations with Members of Congress to discuss the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria.

September 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada to discuss the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he stopped by a meeting between National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice and members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Later in the afternoon, the President recorded separate interviews with Savannah Guthrie of NBC's "Today" program, Wolf Blitzer of CNN's "The Situation Room" program, Scott Pelley of CBS's "Evening News" program, Chris Wallace of Fox's "Fox News Sunday" program, Diane Sawyer of ABC's "World News" program, and Gwen Ifill of PBS's "NewsHour" program, all for later broadcast.

September 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, he had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom and President François Hollande of France to discuss Russia's proposal to place Syria's chemical weapons under international control.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Capitol, the President had separate meetings with the Senate Democratic Caucus and the Senate Republican Conference. Later, in the Situation Room, he met with senior administration officials to discuss preparedness efforts and the overall security posture in advance of the 12th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The President announced his intention to nominate Beth F. Cobert to be Deputy Director for Management at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sloan D. Gibson to be Deputy Secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Heather A. Higginbottom to be Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate James H. Shelton III to be Deputy Secretary of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jo Ann Rooney to be Under Secretary of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul N. Jaenichen, Sr., to be Administrator of the Maritime Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Weil to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate John P. Carlin to be Assistant Attorney General for National Security at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bradley Crowell to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard G. Frank to be Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Esther P. Kia'aina to be Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael D. Lumpkin to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher A. Smith to be Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Puneet Talwar to be Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jay Williams to be Assistant Secretary for Economic Development at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jamie M. Morin to be Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Victoria M. Baecher Wassmer to be Chief Financial Officer at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Larry E. André, Jr., to be Ambassador to Mauritania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anthony L. Gardner to be U.S. Representative to the European Union.

The President announced his intention to nominate Helen Meagher La Lime to be Ambassador to Angola.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael A. Lawson to be U.S. Representative on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The President announced his intention to nominate Luis G. Moreno to be Ambassador to Jamaica.

The President announced his intention to nominate George J. Tsunis to be Ambassador to Norway.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel W. Yohannes to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara J. Lee and Mark Meadows to be U.S. Representatives to the 68th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, Theodore Strickland, and Stephen N. Zack to be Alternate U.S. Representatives to the 68th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

September 11

In the morning, on the South Lawn, the President, Mrs. Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and his wife Jill participated in a moment of silence to mark the 12th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Later, he traveled to Arlington, VA. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, at Food and Friends, the President participated in a service project.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister-designate Anthony J. Abbott of Australia to congratulate him on his coalition's victory in recent parliamentary elections and discuss Australia-U.S. relations and the situation in Syria. He also had a telephone conversation with outgoing Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia to thank him for his friendship, leadership, and support of Australia-U.S. relations and discuss the situation in Syria.

September 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy to the White House on October 16.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia H. Akuetteh to be Ambassador to Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric T. Schultz to be Ambassador to Zambia.

The President announced his intention to nominate David J. Arroyo to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The President announced his intention to nominate Camilla C. Feibelman to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Leslie G. Bowman and Wendy A. Cooper as members of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

The President declared a major disaster in Colorado and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides beginning on September 11 and continuing.

September 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Library, he recorded an interview with George

Stephanopoulos of ABC's "This Week" program for later broadcast.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with labor leaders.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines from October 6 through 12.

September 14

In the morning, the President received a briefing from National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on international diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation in Syria. He also had separate telephone conservations with U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power and Secretary of State John F. Kerry to discuss Russia's proposal to place Syria's chemical weapons under international control.

September 15

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado to receive an update on the severe flooding, express his condolences for the loss of life and concern for those still missing, commend the work of first responders in affected communities, and reinforce his commitment to providing Federal assistance to State and local response efforts.

The President declared a major disaster in Colorado and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides beginning on September 11 and continuing.

September 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with senior advisers.

In the morning and throughout the day, the President was briefed by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco and Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco on the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Secretary of the Navy Raymond E. Mabus to express his condolences to the families and colleagues of the victims of the Navy Yard shooting and commend the Navy personnel and local law enforcement who worked with Federal authorities in responding to the situation. He also called Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr., to express his gratitude for the FBI's quick response to the shooting, receive an update on the ongoing investigation, and commend the FBI and all Federal agencies involved for their coordination with local officials during the ongoing response.

Also during the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil to discuss their recent meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, the postponement of President Rousseff's planned October 23 state visit to the U.S., and Brazil-U.S. relations.

The White House announced that the scheduled Musica Latina event will be postponed out of respect for the victims of the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard and their families.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to the White House on September 30.

The White House announced that the President will present the Medal of Honor to Capt. William D. Swenson, USA, on October 15.

September 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

Also in the afternoon, the President received a briefing on the September 16 shooting at the Washington Navy Yard from Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., Federal Bu-

reau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr., and members of his national security team.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Liberty, MO, on September 20.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita as President of Mali in Bamako, Mali, on September 19: Mary Beth Leonard (head of delegation); Linda Thomas-Greenfield; and Jack Leslie.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tamara W. Ashford to be a judge on the U.S. Tax Court.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leslie R. Caldwell to be Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard Stengel to be Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the Department of State.

September 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The President announced the appointment of the following individuals as members of the President's Export Council:

Kenneth C. Frazier;
Andrés R. Gluski;
Marillyn A. Hewson;
Vanessa Keitges;
Ian C. Read;
Virginia M. Rometty; and
Arne M. Sorenson.

September 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, at the Capital Hilton hotel, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

The White House announced that the President will attend a memorial ceremony for shooting victims and deliver remarks at the Marine Barracks Washington, DC, on September 22.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New York City on September 23 and 24.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bruce A. Heyman to be U.S. Ambassador to Canada.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathryn B. Thomson to be General Counsel at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kevin Whitaker to be U.S. Ambassador to Colombia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles N.W. Keckler to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jim Powell as Representative of the United States to the Southern States Energy Board.

The President announced the nomination of Cynthia A. Bashant to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

The President announced the nomination of Stanley A. Bastian to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.

The President announced the nomination of the following individuals to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona:

Diane J. Humetewa;
Steven P. Logan;
Douglas L. Rayes; and
John J. Tuchi.

The President announced the nomination of Jon D. Levy to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Maine.

The President announced the nomination of Manish S. Shah to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

September 20

In the morning, the President traveled to Liberty, MO, where, at the Ford Motor Co. stamping plant, where he toured manufacturing facilities with Ford Motor Co. President and Chief Executive Officer Alan Mulally, Stamping Plant Launch Manager Todd Jaranowski, and UAW Local 249 President Jeff Wright and visited with employees.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

September 22

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to extend his condolences for the loss of life in the September 21 terrorist attack at Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Marine Barracks Washington, DC, where they met with family members of employees killed in the September 16 shooting at the Washington Navy Yard.

September 23

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to New York City, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to congratulate her on her party's victory in the September 22 elections.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Waldorf Astoria New York hotel, where, in the Jade Room, he met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power, and other staff at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Then, in the Starlight Roof, he and Mrs. Obama attended a reception for visiting heads of state and government attending the U.N. General Assembly.

September 24

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to United Nations Headquarters, where he met with U.N. General Assembly President John W. Ashe.

In the afternoon, at United Nations Headquarters, the President met with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Largo, MD, on September 26.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven J. Anthony to be a member of the Railroad Retirement Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan McCue to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Debra L. Miller to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Catherine A. Novelli to be Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment at the Department of State.

The President announced the nomination of Mark G. Mastroianni and Indira Talwani to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

The President announced the nomination of David J. Barron to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

September 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with mayors, county officials, and State legislators to discuss implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Later, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marcelite Harris and Arlen D. Jameson as members of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The President announced his intention to appoint Elizabeth Young McNally and Patrick J. Murphy as members of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Military Academy.

The President announced his intention to appoint Sally Susman as a member of the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board.

The President announced the nomination of Theodore D. Chuang and George J. Hazel to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland.

The President declared a major disaster in North Carolina and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from July 3 through 13.

September 26

In the morning, the President traveled to Largo, MD. Later, he returned to the Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

In the evening, in the Gallatin Room of the Jefferson hotel, the President attended a Democratic National Committee event.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan to the White House on October 23.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dana J. Hyde to be Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark E. Lopes to be U.S. Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank.

The President announced his intention to appoint Renée J. James as a member of the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as general trustees on the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

Frank F. Islam;
Amalia Perea Mahoney;
Shonda L. Rhimes;
David M. Rubenstein;
Alexandra C. Stanton; and
Walter F. Ulloa.

September 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hassan Rouhani of Iran to discuss Iran-U.S. relations.

The White House announced that the President will host the White House Tribal Nations Conference at the Department of the Interior on November 13.

The President declared a major disaster in Santa Clara Pueblo and ordered Federal aid to supplement tribal recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from July 19 through 21.

September 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid, Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to discuss raising the public debt limit and avoiding a Federal Government shutdown.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alan L. Cohen and Lanhee J. Chen to be members of the Social Security Advisory Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas R. Nides to be Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laura Paulson to be a member of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

The President announced his intention to nominate Quyen D. Chu and Anhlan P. Nguyen to be members of the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

The President declared a major disaster in New Mexico and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from July 23 through 28.

October 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he was briefed by Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew, Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco on the Federal Government shutdown and the public debt limit.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius met with citizens who will benefit from the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Benigno S. Aquino III of the Philippines to discuss the cancellation of his visit to the Philippines due to the Federal Government shutdown and inform President Aquino that Secretary of State John F. Kerry would travel to the Philippines in his place. Also in the evening, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Mohamed Najib bin Abdul Razak of Malaysia to discuss the cancellation of his visit to Malaysia to attend the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. He also informed Prime Minister Najib that Secretary of State Kerry would lead a U.S. delegation to the summit including Secretary of Commerce Penny S. Pritzker and U.S. Trade Representative Michael B. Froman.

The President declared a major disaster in Pennsylvania and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from June 26 through July 11.

October 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he was briefed by Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew, Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco on the Federal Government shutdown and the public debt limit.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with members of the Financial Services Forum to discuss the need to raise the public debt limit. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden had lunch.

Later, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid, Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and Secretary of the Treasury Lew to discuss the Federal Government shutdown and the public debt limit.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with senior advisers.

October 3

In the morning, the President was briefed on preparations for Tropical Storm Karen. Then, he traveled to Rockville, MD. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Also in the afternoon, the President was briefed on the shooting outside the U.S. Capitol.

In the evening, the President was briefed on preparations for Tropical Storm Karen. Also in the evening, he had a telephone conversation with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia to discuss the cancellation of his visit to Indonesia to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit due to the Federal Government shutdown and inform President Yudhoyono that Secretary of State John F. Kerry would attend the summit in his place. Also in the evening, he had a telephone conversation with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei to discuss the cancellation of his visit to Brunei to attend the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations Summit and the East Asia Summit. He also informed Sultan Hassanal that Secretary of State Kerry would attend the summits in his place.

October 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Also in the morning, he was briefed on preparations for Tropical Storm Karen.

In the afternoon, the President and Vice President Biden visited Taylor Gourmet restaurant, where they purchased lunch, greeted patrons, and thanked restaurant staff for offering a discount to furloughed Federal employees. Later, he was briefed by Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco, and other senior advisers on the impacts of the Federal Government shutdown.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arnold A. Chacon to be Director General of the Foreign Service at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arun M. Kumar to be Assistant Secretary for International Trade Administration and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel B. Smith to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Helen Tierney to be Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Management at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kelly R. Welsh to be General Counsel at the Department of Commerce.

October 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President was briefed by Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco, and Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Robert L. Nabors II on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown.

October 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner to discuss raising the public debt limit and ending the Federal Government shutdown.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

During the day, the President was briefed by Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Robert L. Nabors II, and other senior advisers on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown.

October 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Library, he recorded separate interviews with Doreen Gentzler of WRC in Washington, DC; Rick Williams of WPVI in Philadelphia, PA; Keith Cate of WFLA in Tampa, FL; and Tracy Sears of WTVR in Richmond, VA. Then, in the East Room, he and Vice President Biden met with members of the House Democratic Caucus.

October 10

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister John P. Key of New Zealand to thank him for chairing the meeting of Trans-Pacific Partnership leaders in Bali, Indonesia, on October 8 and discuss outcomes from the meeting. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also

in the Oval Office, they were briefed by Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Robert L. Nabors II, and and other senior advisers on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Later, in the State Dining Room, they met with members of the Senate Democratic Caucus. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, they met with the leadership of the House Republican Conference.

October 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, they were briefed by Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell, White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, and other senior advisers on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown. Then, in the State Dining Room, he and the Vice President met with members of the Senate Republican Conference.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a conference call with a bipartisan group of 25 Governors to discuss raising the public debt limit and the impact of the Federal Government shutdown on State budgets and the economy. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with small-business owners to discuss the public debt limit and the impact of the Federal Government shutdown on their businesses and thank them for their work to create jobs and invest in their communities.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a conference call with 150 business leaders to discuss the public debt limit and the ongoing Federal Government shutdown. Later, also in the Oval Office, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughter Malia met with Malala Yousafzai, a 16-year-old Pakistani student and education activist who was shot in the head and neck by Taliban gunmen in the Pakistan's Swat Valley on October 9, 2012.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor to Capt. William D. Swenson, USA, on October 15.

October 12

In the afternoon, the President met with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid and Sens. Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, and Patricia L. Murray.

During the day, the President was briefed by White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown.

October 13

In the afternoon, the President was briefed by White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Robert L. Nabors II, and other senior advisers on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown.

Also in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to discuss the ongoing Federal Government shutdown and the public debt limit.

October 14

In the morning, at Martha's Table, Inc., the President met with furloughed Federal employees who spent their time volunteering for charities during the Federal Government shutdown. He also helped prepare food to be distributed to the needy.

In the afternoon, the President was briefed by White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough and other senior advisers on the impact of the Federal Government shutdown.

October 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he recorded separate interviews with Diana Williams of WABC in New York City; Kevin Cooney of KCCI in Des Moines, IA; and Claudia Botero of KMEX in Los Angeles, CA.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the leadership of the House Democratic Caucus. Later, also in the

Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

October 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq to the White House on November 1.

October 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy.

October 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway to congratulate her on taking office and discuss the situation in Syria and Norway-U.S. relations.

October 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss France-U.S. relations, alleged surveillance of French citizens by the National Security Agency, and the situation in Syria.

The President announced the designation of Patricia E. Campbell-Smith as Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

October 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New York City on October 25.

October 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss Germany-U.S. relations and allegations that her telephone communications had been monitored by the National Security Agency.

The White House announced that the President will award the Presidential Medal of Freedom at the White House on November 20.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding from July 22 through August 16.

October 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the Jefferson hotel, the President participated in an event hosted by the Democratic National Committee's Women's Leadership Forum.

The President announced his intention to appoint Luke J. McCormack as Chief Information Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to appoint Edmund J. Malesky as a member of the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Elisa Spungen Bildner, John Farahi,

and Dana M. Perlman as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

October 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New York City, where, at the Pathways in Technology Early College High School, he toured a classroom and met with teachers and students.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster for the Santa Clara Pueblo and ordered Federal aid to supplement tribal recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from September 13 through 16.

October 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss diplomatic efforts with Iran, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and other regional issues.

In the afternoon, on the South Lawn, the President recorded an interview with ABC News's Jim Avila for the Fusion network's "AMERICA With Jorge Ramos" program for later broadcast. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Boston, MA, on October 30.

October 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Situation Room, he met with chief executive officers from the financial, energy, defense, and information technology sectors on strengthening cybersecurity and critical infrastructure.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2013 Stanley Cup Champion Chicago Blackhawks to the White House on November 4.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert C. Barber to be U.S. Ambassador to Iceland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nani A. Coloretti to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bathsheba N. Crocker to be Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan Elkind to be Assistant Secretary for International Affairs at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark D. Gilbert to be U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph S. Hezir to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tina S. Kaidanow to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank of Ambassador at Large, at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate William A. LaPlante, Jr., to be Assistant Secretary for Acquisition at the Department of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate Theodore R. Mitchell to be Under Secretary of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Massie Ritsch to be Assistant Secretary for Communications and Outreach at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles H. Rivkin to be Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rhea S. Suh to be Assistant Secre-

tary for Fish and Wildlife at the Department of the Interior.

The President declared a major disaster in North Carolina and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides on July 27.

The President declared a major disaster in New Mexico and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, and mudslides from September 9 through 22.

October 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Boston, MA. En route to Faneuil Hall, he stopped at City Hall Plaza, where he was joined by William F. Russell, former center, National Basketball Association's Boston Celtics, to preview a new statue of Mr. Russell in honor of his lifetime achievements. Later, he traveled to Weston, MA.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

October 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator-elect Cory A. Booker of New Jersey. Later, on the South Portico, he, Mrs. Obama, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson greeted trick-or-treaters.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia to the White House on December 3.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm on October 4 and 5.

November 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President was briefed by Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco on the shooting at Los Angeles International Airport.

November 3

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Arlington, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

November 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with John E. Farrell, manager of Major League Baseball's Boston Red Sox, to congratulate him on his team's eighth World Series Championship. Later, he met with Special Envoys for Guantanamo Closure Clifford Sloan, for the Department of State, and Paul M. Lewis, for the Department of Defense, to discuss the closing of the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Dallas, TX, on November 6.

November 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Blue Room, he and Mrs. Obama made a surprise drop-by visit with White House tour guests. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he and Vice President Biden met with business leaders to discuss immigration reform and the economy.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, he traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he visited with wounded

U.S. military personnel and their families. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with Governor-elect Terence R. McAuliffe of Virginia and Mayors-elect Bill de Blasio of New York City and Martin J. Walsh of Boston, MA, to congratulate them on their election victories.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New Orleans, LA, and Miami, FL, on November 8.

The White House announced that the President will host the White House Tribal Nations Conference at the Department of the Interior on November 13.

November 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with Democratic Senators to discuss the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Christopher J. Christie of New Jersey to congratulate him on his reelection. Later, he traveled to Dallas, TX.

In the evening, the President traveled to Highland Park, TX. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate Colleen Bradley Bell to be Ambassador to Hungary.

The President announced his intention to nominate Madelyn R. Creedon to be Principal Deputy Administrator for Nuclear Security at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Janice M. Schneider to be Assistant Secretary for Land and Mineral Management at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph W. Westphal to be Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ellen Dudley Williams to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph P. Mohorovic to be Commissioner of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

November 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. John S. McCain III to discuss immigration reform legislation. Then, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, he recorded an interview with Chuck Todd of NBC News for later broadcast.

In the evening, in the Family Theater, the President hosted a screening of the film "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom."

The White House announced that the President will welcome King Mohammed VI of Morocco to the White House on November 22.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas P. Beaudreau to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas A. Burke to be Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Neil G. Kornze to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Caroline D. Krass to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ericka M. Miller to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stefan M. Selig to be Under Secretary for International Trade at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to appoint Cheryl D. Alston and Dallas L. Salis-

bury as members of the Advisory Committee to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President announced the nomination of James D. Peterson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin.

The President announced the nomination of Nancy J. Rosenstengel to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois.

The President announced the nomination of Ronnie L. White to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

The President announced the nomination of Kevin W. Techau to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Iowa.

The President announced the nomination of Robin S. Rosenbaum to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

November 8

In the morning, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, where he toured the Napoleon Container Terminal with Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx, Rep. Cedric L. Richmond, Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal, Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu, Port of New Orleans president and chief executive officer Gary P. LaGrange, Ports America Louisiana general manager Keith Palmisano, and International Longshoremen's Association stevedore Chris Hammond.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Miami, FL. Upon arrival, he traveled to Coral Gables, FL, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Hilton Miami Downtown hotel, where he remained overnight.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent continued nuclear weapons development in Iran.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, snowstorm, and flooding from October 3 through 16.

November 9

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

November 11

In the morning, in the East Room, the President hosted a Veterans Day breakfast for veterans and their families. Vice President Joe Biden also attended. Later, they traveled to Arlington, VA, where they participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Mrs. Obama and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden, also attended. Later, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

November 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Benigno S. Aquino III of the Philippines to express his condolences for the damage and loss of life caused by Super Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines on November 8. They also discussed U.S. assistance in the recovery effort. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the situations in Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with tribal leaders attending the White House Tribal Nations Conference on November 13.

In the afternoon, at Molly Malone's restaurant, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch with PO Katie Cole, USCG; Lt. (jg.) Courtney Williams, USN; Cpl. Jason Davis, USMC; Senior M. Sgt. Cynthia Gamez, USAF; and Sfc. Angel Febus Munoz, USA. Later, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with military leadership and combatant commanders.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President hosted a dinner for military leadership, combatant commanders, and their spouses.

Mrs. Obama, Vice President Biden, and his wife Jill also attended. Also in the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid to discuss implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and other issues.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Cleveland, OH, on November 14.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Philadelphia, PA, on November 14.

November 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss shared security interests, including international diplomatic efforts to prevent continued nuclear weapons development in Iran. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with religious leaders to discuss immigration reform.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will award the Presidential Medal of Freedom on November 20.

November 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Cleveland, OH, where he toured the ArcelorMittal Cleveland steelmaking facility and met with employees. Later, he traveled to Philadelphia, PA.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Henry J.F. Korrell III and Victor B. Maddox to be members of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Debo P. Adegbile to be Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marc A. Kastner to be Director of the Office of Science at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark E. Lopes to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vivek H. Murthy to be Surgeon General at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Franklin M. Orr, Jr., to be Under Secretary for Science at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan L. Graham and J. Michael McQuade to be members of the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology.

November 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Giorgi Margvelashvili as President of the Republic of Georgia in Tbilisi, Georgia, on November 17:

Rajiv J. Shah (head of delegation);
Richard B. Norland;
Paige E. Alexander; and
Thomas O. Melia.

November 16

During the day, in the State Dining Room, the President met with participants in a leadership program for young professionals in Government.

November 17

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to College Park, MD, where, at the Comcast

Center, they attended a men's basketball game between the University of Maryland and Oregon State University, where Mrs. Obama's brother Craig M. Robinson serves as head basketball coach.

November 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with senior advisers. In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The President announced his intention to nominate Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Edith Ramirez and Geovette E. Washington as members of the Council of the Administrative Conference of the United States.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities:

Janet Keller;
Kerry J. Marshall;
Kalpen S. Modi;
Andrew J. Weinstein; and
John L. Young.

November 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with Sens. Richard J. Durbin, Charles E. Schumer, Saxby Chambliss, Robert P. Corker, Jr., Michael D. Crapo, Dianne Feinstein, Timothy P. Johnson, Carl M. Levin, Robert Menendez, and John S. McCain III to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent continued nuclear weapons development in Iran. Secretary of State John F. Kerry and National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice also attended.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with 2013 U.S. Nobel Laureates and their spouses to congratulate them on their contributions to physics, medicine, and economics and show them White House memorabilia of interest. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The President announced his intention to appoint Stephanie Cutter and Caroline "Kim" Taylor as members of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

The President announced his intention to appoint Margaret Russell as a general trustee of the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mary Menell Zients as Chair of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

November 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at Arlington National Cemetery, they and former President William J. Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton participated in a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of former President John F. Kennedy. Then, he and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with representatives from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners to discuss the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and related issues.

November 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, he signed S. 330, the HIV Organ Policy Equity Act. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he dropped by a meeting between Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia.

Later in the afternoon, in the State Dining Room, the President met with the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology. Then, in the East Room, he participated in

a photo opportunity with the fall class of White House interns.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brad R. Carson to be Under Secretary of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Maureen E. Cormack to be Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leslie Berger Kiernan to be Representative of the United States to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Radzanowski to be Chief Financial Officer of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Roth to be Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard A. Kennedy to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate Heather L. MacDougall to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Anita K. Blanchard as a member of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gargee Ghosh and John D. Podesta as members of the President's Global Development Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ira F. Jaffe as Chair of Presidential Emergency Board No. 244.

The President announced his intention to appoint Roberta Golick and Arnold M. Zack as members of Presidential Emergency Board No. 244.

The President announced the nomination of Andrew M. Luger to be U.S. attorney for the District of Minnesota.

The President announced the nomination of Damon P. Martinez to be U.S. Attorney for the District of New Mexico.

The President announced the nomination of Sherry Moore Trafford and Steven M. Wellner to be judges on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The President announced the appointment of Alan J. Patricof as a member of the President's Global Development Council.

November 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Blue Room, he and Mrs. Obama recorded an interview with Barbara Walters of ABC's "20/20" program for later broadcast.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with student representatives from the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship business innovation program. Later, in the Situation Room, he participated in a video conference with U.S. Peace Corps volunteers stationed in Tanzania. He was joined in the Situation Room by Peace Corps Acting Director Carolyn Hessler-Radelet, Special Olympics Chief Executive Officer Timothy P. Shriver, former Sen. Harris L. Wofford, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington Board Chair Laura Mariko Schmitz, and National Peace Corps Association President Glenn Blumhorst. During the meeting, he observed a moment of silence to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of former President John F. Kennedy.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with King Mohammed VI of Morocco to discuss Morocco-U.S. relations and U.S. support for Morocco's democratic and economic reforms.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry, National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East Philip H. Gordon.

The White House announced that the President will hold the Thanksgiving turkey pardoning ceremony at the White House on November 27.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Seattle, WA, on November 24.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA, on November 25.

November 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent continued nuclear weapons development in Iran and Israel-U.S. security cooperation.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Seattle, WA. Later, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

In the evening, the President traveled to Medina, WA. Later, he traveled to the Westin Seattle Hotel in Seattle, where he remained overnight.

November 25

In the morning, the President traveled to San Francisco, CA, where, at the San Francisco International Airport, he was greeted by Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser. Later, he traveled to Los Angeles, CA.

In the evening, the President traveled to Beverly Hills, CA. Later, he traveled to the Beverly Hilton hotel, where he remained overnight.

November 26

In the morning, the President traveled to Los Angeles, CA, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser. Then, he traveled to Glendale, CA, where, at DreamWorks Animation SKG, Inc., he toured studio facilities and visited with employees. Later, also at DreamWorks, he met with film industry representatives.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, winter storms, tornadoes, and flooding from October 2 through 6.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, and tornadoes on November 17.

November 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent continued nuclear weapons development in Iran and Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President signed H.R. 1848, H.R. 3204, and S. 252. Later, at the Capital Area Food Bank, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha participated in a service event.

November 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had separate telephone conversations with 10 members of the Armed Forces to thank them for their service.

November 29

In the morning, at the North Portico, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha received the White House Christmas tree. Then, on the National Mall, he and Mrs. Obama visited with participants in a Fast for Families demonstration on behalf of immigration reform.

November 30

In the afternoon, at Politics and Prose Bookstore, the President and his daughters Malia and Sasha visited with patrons and purchased books to promote Small Business Saturday.

December 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had a working lunch with President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

December 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

December 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Greenberg Theatre at American University, the President recorded an interview with Chris Matthews of MSNBC's "Hardball With Chris Matthews" program for later broadcast.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Jacob G. Zuma of South Africa to express his condolences on the death of former President Nelson R. Mandela and discuss South Africa-U.S. relations.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kevin T. Hanretta as Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security, and Preparedness at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Paula E. Boggs as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robin L. Diamonte as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint John Donahoe as a member of the President's Export Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler as a U.S. Commissioner to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

The President announced his intention to appoint Laura M. Ricketts and Reginald Van Lee as general trustees on the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

December 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Graça Machel, wife of former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa, to express his condolences for the death of her husband.

December 8

In the evening, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the 2013 Kennedy Center Honors Gala.

December 9

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Dakar, Senegal, arriving in the evening. Former President George W. Bush, former First Lady Laura Bush, and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton accompanied them aboard Air Force One. Then, they traveled to Centurion, South Africa, arriving the following morning.

December 10

In the morning, upon arrival at Waterkloof Air Force Base in Centurion, South Africa, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg in Johannesburg.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to First National Bank Stadium in Johannesburg. Later, they returned to the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Dakar, Senegal, arriving the following morning. Former President George

W. Bush and former First Lady Laura Bush accompanied them aboard Air Force One.

The President announced the designation the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Kenya to attend a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Republic of Kenyain Kasarani, Kenya, on December 12: Robert F. Godec (head of delegation); and Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

December 11

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC. Former First Lady Laura Bush accompanied them aboard Air Force One.

December 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey of Spain to the White House on January 13.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas E. Rothman to be a member of the National Council on the Arts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter A. Selfridge to be Chief of Protocol at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas A. Silliman to be Ambassador to Kuwait.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert A. Wood to be U.S. Representative to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament.

The President announced his intention to nominate Portia Y. Wu to be Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Administration at the Department of Labor.

December 13

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by the Rim Fire from August 17 through October 24.

December 14

In the morning, in the Map Room, the President and Mrs. Obama lit 26 candles and observed a moment of silence to commemorate the first anniversary of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT.

December 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with U.S. Trade Representative Michael B. Froman, Secretary of Commerce Penny S. Pritzker, and other senior advisers to discuss U.S. trade expansion efforts and the ongoing Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

December 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, they met with chief executive officers from the information technology sector to discuss the online health insurance marketplace, Federal Government technology procurement policies, and information security concerns.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the opening ceremony of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, on February 7:

Janet A. Napolitano (head of delegation);
Michael A. McFaul;
Robert L. Nabors II;
Billie Jean King; and
Brian A. Boitano.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the closing

ceremony of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, on February 23:

William J. Burns (head of delegation);
Michael A. McFaul;
Bonnie K. Blair;
Caitlin Cahow; and
Eric A. Heiden.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric B. Rosenbach to be Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Darci L. Vetter to be Chief Agricultural Negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elisebeth Collins Cook to be a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Mark McWatters to be a member of the National Credit Union Administration Board.

December 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile to congratulate her on her victory in the December 15 second-round election and discuss Chile-U.S. relations. Then, in the Situation Room, he met with his Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies to discuss the report it submitted to Congress on December 13.

December 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha will travel to Honolulu, HI, on December 20.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paige E. Alexander to be Assistant Administrator for the Middle East at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sharon Y. Bowen to be a Commissioner on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate John C. Cruden to be Assistant Attorney General for Environment and Natural Resources at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Janet McCabe to be Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leon Rodriguez to be Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate David B. Shear to be Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jane Watson Stetson as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mary Jacksteit as Chairman of the Federal Service Impasses Panel at the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to appoint Martin H. Malin and Don Wasserman as members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel at the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to appoint Eric Dannenmaier and Robert Varney as members of the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

The President announced his intention to appoint James J. Murren as a member of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Hill Harper as a member of the President's Cancer Panel.

The President announced the nomination of the following individuals to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia:

Michael P. Boggs;
Mark H. Cohen;
Leigh Martin May; and
Eleanor L. Ross.

The President announced the nomination of Tanya S. Chutkan to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The President announced the nomination of M. Hannah Lauck to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

The President announced the nomination of Leo T. Sorokin to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

The President announced the nomination of James A. Soto to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona.

The President announced the nomination of Julie E. Carnes to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

The President announced the nomination of Gregg J. Costa to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

December 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to Honolulu, HI. Upon arrival at Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam, HI, while still aboard Air Force One, he received an update on the status of four U.S. servicemembers who were wounded while evacuating U.S. citizens in Bor, South Sudan. Then, he and the First Family traveled to their vacation residence in Kailua, HI, arriving early the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate Max S. Baucus to be Ambassador to China.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding on October 30 and 31.

December 21

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to Kailua, HI. Later, he had a teleconference call with National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Deputy National Security Adviser Antony J. Blinken, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, and Senior Director for African Affairs Grant T. Harris to discuss the situation in South Sudan.

December 22

In the morning, the President received an update on the situation in South Sudan.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu, HI, where, at the Stan Sheriff Center, they attended a men's basketball game between the University of Akron and Oregon State University, where Mrs. Obama's brother Craig M. Robinson serves as head basketball coach. Later, they returned to their vacation residence in Kailua, HI.

During the day, the President enrolled in a health care plan on the DC Health Link website. He also received an update via teleconference on the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

December 24

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with 10 members of the Armed Forces to thank them for their service. He also had separate telephone conversations with four U.S. servicemembers who were recently wounded while evacuating U.S. citizens in Bor, South Sudan.

December 25

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay, HI, where, at Anderson Hall, they met with servicemembers and their families.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to their vacation residence in Kailua, HI, where they remained overnight.

December 27

During the day, the President received an update via teleconference on the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

December 31

In the afternoon, the President and his daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Island Snow Hawaii at the Kailua Beach Center, where he purchased shave ice and posed for a photograph with employees. Then, he walked to an outside seating area at Bob's Pizzeria and greeted a small crowd of people. Later, he and his daughters returned to their vacation residence, where they remained overnight.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted July 9

Mark Bradley Childress,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Republic of Tanzania.

Wanda Felton,
of New York, to be First Vice President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States for a term expiring January 20, 2017 (reappointment).

Tomasz P. Malinowski,
of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, vice Michael H. Posner, resigned.

Dennis V. McGinn,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice Jackalyne Pfannenstiel, resigned.

Carlos Roberto Moreno,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belize.

Evan Ryan,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Educational and Cultural Affairs), vice Judith Ann Stewart Stock, resigning.

Submitted July 10

Matthew Winthrop Barzun,
of Kentucky, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Margaret Louise Cummisky,
of Hawaii, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice April S. Boyd, resigned.

John Hoover,
of Massachusetts, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Crystal Nix-Hines,
of California, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

John R. Phillips,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Italian Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of San Marino.

Michael Keith Yudin,
of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, vice Alexa E. Posny.

Submitted July 11

William Ward Nooter,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice A. Franklin Burgess, retiring.

Submitted July 15

Rhonda K. Schmidtlein,
of Missouri, to be a member of the United States International Trade Commission for a term expiring December 16, 2021, vice Shara L. Aranoff, term expired.

Gregory Dainard Winfree,
of New York, to be Administrator of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Department of Transportation, vice Peter H. Appel.

Submitted July 16

Kent Yoshiho Hirozawa,
of New York, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2016, vice Wilma B. Liebman, term expired.

Nancy Jean Schiffer,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2014, vice Craig Becker.

Withdrawn July 16

Sharon Block,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2014, vice Craig Becker, which was sent to the Senate on February 13, 2013.

Richard F. Griffin, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2016, vice Wilma B. Liebman, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on February 13, 2013.

Submitted July 19

Nisha Desai Biswal,
of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, vice Robert Orris Blake, Jr.

Timothy M. Broas,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Scott S. Dahl,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of Labor, vice Gordon S. Heddell, resigned.

Julia Frifield,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Legislative Affairs), vice David S. Adams, resigned.

Martha L. Minow,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Joseph Pius Pietrzyk,
of Ohio, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Carolyn Hessler Radelet,
of Virginia, to be Director of the Peace Corps, vice Aaron S. Williams, resigned.

Elizabeth M. Robinson,
of Washington, to be Under Secretary of Energy, vice Kristina M. Johnson, resigned.

Frank A. Rose,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Verification and Compliance), vice Rose Eilene Gottemoeller.

Adam M. Scheinman,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, to be Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation, with the rank of Ambassador.

Jessica Garfola Wright,
of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, vice Erin C. Conaton, resigned.

Submitted July 25

Vince Girdhari Chhabria,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Susan Y. Illston, retired.

Matthew Frederick Leitman,
of Michigan, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, vice Marianne O. Battani, retired.

Judith Ellen Levy,
of Michigan, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, vice Nancy G. Edmunds, retired.

Laurie J. Michelson,
of Michigan, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, vice George Caram Steeh III, retired.

James Maxwell Moody Jr.,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas, vice Susan Webber Wright, retiring.

Linda Vivienne Parker,
of Michigan, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, vice Robert H. Cleland, retired.

Leslie E. Bains,
of New York, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2015, vice William S. Jasien, term expired.

Tony Hammond,
of Missouri, to be a Commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission for a term expiring October 14, 2018 (reappointment).

Caroline Kennedy,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan.

Marcel J. Lettre II,
of Maryland, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (new position).

Donald Lu,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Albania.

Robert A. Sherman,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Portuguese Republic.

Robert Michael Simon,
of Maryland, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice Sherburne B. Abbott.

Submitted July 30

Nicholas Christopher Geale,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2016 (reappointment).

Submitted July 31

Robert O. Blake, Jr.,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Indonesia.

Michael L. Connor,
of New Mexico, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior, vice David J. Hayes, resigned.

France A. Cordova,
of New Mexico, to be Director of the National Science Foundation for a term of 6 years, vice Subra Suresh, resigned.

Thomas Frederick Daughton,
of Arizona, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Namibia.

John L. Estrada,
of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sylvia I. Garcia,
of Michigan, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Transportation, vice Christopher P. Bertram, resigned.

Philip S. Goldberg,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Philippines.

Jo Emily Handelsman,
of Connecticut, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice Carl Wieman, resigned.

Michael Stephen Hoza,
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cameroon.

Amy Jane Hyatt,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Palau.

Noah Bryson Mamet,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Argentine Republic.

L. Paige Marvel,
of Maryland, to be a judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years (reappointment).

Kenneth L. Mossman,
of Arizona, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for a term expiring October 18, 2016, vice John Edward Mansfield, term expired.

Sarah Bloom Raskin,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, vice Neal S. Wolin.

Eunice S. Reddick,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Niger.

Karen Clark Stanton,
of Michigan, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Gregory B. Starr,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Diplomatic Security), vice Eric J. Boswell, resigned.

Kenneth R. Weinstein,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2014, vice Dennis Mulhaupt, resigned.

Submitted August 1

Gary Blankinship,
of Texas, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Texas for the term of 4 years, vice Ruben Monzon, resigned.

Christopher Reid Cooper,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice Royce C. Lamberth, retired.

Daniel D. Crabtree,
of Kansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Kansas, vice John W. Lungstrum, retired.

Michelle T. Friedland,
of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice Raymond C. Fisher, retired.

M. Douglas Harpool,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Missouri, vice Richard E. Dorr, deceased.

Robert L. Hobbs,
of Texas, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Texas for the term of 4 years, vice John Lee Moore, term expired.

Sheryl H. Lipman,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee, vice Jon P. McCalla, retired.

Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr.,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Harvey Bartle, III, retired.

Nancy L. Moritz,
of Kansas, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, vice Deanell Reece Tacha, retired.

John B. Owens,
of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice Stephen S. Trott, retired.

Amos Rojas, Jr.,
of Florida, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Florida for the term of 4 years, vice Christina Pharo, term expired.

Edward G. Smith,
of Pennsylvania, to be U. S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Berle M. Schiller, retired.

Peter C. Tobin,
of Ohio, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Ohio for a term of 4 years, vice Cathy Jo Jones, resigned.

Stevan Eaton Bunnell,
of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, vice Ivan K. Fong, resigned.

Dwight L. Bush, Sr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Morocco.

Steven Croley,
of Michigan, to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy, vice Gregory Howard Woods.

Karen Dynan,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Janice Eberly.

J. Christopher Giancarlo,
of New Jersey, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for the remainder of the term expiring April 13, 2014, vice Jill Sommers, resigned.

Richard F. Griffin, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board for a term of 4 years, vice Ronald E. Meisburg, resigned.

Pamela K. Hamamoto,
of Hawaii, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Betty E. King.

Matthew T. Harrington,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Christopher A. Hart,
of Colorado, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2017 (reappointment).

Deborah A.P. Hersman,
of Virginia, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of 2 years (reappointment).

Deborah A.P. Hersman,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2018 (reappointment).

Deborah Lee James,
of Virginia, to be Secretary of the Air Force, vice Michael Bruce Donley, resigned.

Peter Joseph Kadzik,
of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Ronald H. Weich, resigned.

R. Gil Kerlikowske,
of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Customs, Department of Homeland Security, vice Alan D. Bersin, resigned.

Frank G. Klotz,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security, vice Thomas P. D'Agostino, resigned.

John Andrew Koskinen,
of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2017, vice Douglas H. Shulman, term expired.

Michael P. O'Rielly,
of New York, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2014, vice Robert M. McDowell, resigned.

Anne W. Patterson,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Ambassador, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs), vice C. David Welch, resigned.

Patrick Pizzella,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 1, 2015, vice Thomas M. Beck, resigned.

Linda A. Schwartz,
of Connecticut, to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, vice Raul Perea-Henze, resigned.

Sarah Sewall,
of Massachusetts, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights), vice Maria Otero, resigned.

Suzanne Eleanor Spaulding,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, vice Rand Beers.

Kathryn D. Sullivan,
of Ohio, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, vice Jane Lubchenco, resigned.

Withdrawn August 1

Lafe E. Solomon,
of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board for a term of 4 years, vice Ronald E. Meisburg, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on May 23, 2013.

Submitted September 11

Larry Edward André, Jr.,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Elizabeth Frawley Bagley,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

John P. Carlin,
of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Lisa O. Monaco, resigned.

Beth F. Cobert,
of California, to be Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, vice Jeffrey D. Zients, resigned.

Bradley Crowell,
of Nevada, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs), vice Jeffrey A. Lane.

Richard G. Frank,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Sherry Glied, resigned.

Anthony Luzzatto Gardner,
of New York, to be Representative of the United States of America to the European Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Sloan D. Gibson,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, vice W. Scott Gould.

Heather Anne Higginbottom,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, vice Thomas R. Nides, resigned.

Paul Nathan Jaenichen, Sr.,
of Kentucky, to be Administrator of the Maritime Administration, vice David T. Matsuda, resigned.

Esther Puakela Kia'aina,
of Hawaii, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Anthony Marion Babauta.

Helen Meagher La Lime,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Angola.

Michael Anderson Lawson,
of California, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Barbara Lee,
of California, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Michael D. Lumpkin,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Michael A. Sheehan.

Mark Meadows,
of North Carolina, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Luis G. Moreno,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Jamaica.

Jamie Michael Morin,
of Michigan, to be Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Department of Defense, vice Christine H. Fox, resigned.

Jo Ann Rooney,
of Massachusetts, to be Under Secretary of the Navy, vice Robert O. Work, resigned.

James H. Shelton III,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Education, vice Anthony W. Miller, resigned.

Christopher Smith,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy), vice Charles DeWitt McConnell, resigned.

Theodore Strickland,
of Ohio, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Puneet Talwar,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs), vice Andrew J. Shapiro.

George James Tsunis,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Norway.

Victoria Marie Baecher Wassmer,
of Illinois, to be Chief Financial Officer, Environmental Protection Agency, vice Barbara J. Bennett, resigned.

David Weil,
of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, vice Paul DeCamp.

Roy K.J. Williams,
of Ohio, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, vice John R. Fernandez, resigned.

Daniel W. Yohannes,
of Colorado, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with the rank of Ambassador.

Stephen N. Zack,
of Florida, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Submitted September 17

Cynthia H. Akuetteh,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Gabonese Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

David J. Arroyo,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2016, vice Elizabeth Courtney, term expired.

Camilla C. Feibelman,
of New Mexico, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring April 15, 2017, vice Stephen M. Prescott, term expired.

Eric T. Schultz,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zambia.

Submitted September 18

Tamara Wenda Ashford,
of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years, vice Mary Ann Cohen, retired.

Leslie Ragon Caldwell,
of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Lanny A. Breuer, resigned.

Richard Stengel,
of New York, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, vice Tara D. Sonenshine.

Submitted September 19

Cynthia Ann Bashant,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of California, vice Irma E. Gonzalez, retired.

Stanley Allen Bastian,
of Washington, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington, vice Edward F. Shea, retired.

Diane J. Humetewa,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice Mary H. Murguia, elevated.

Jon David Levy,
of Maine, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Maine, vice George Z. Singal, retired.

Steven Paul Logan,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice James A. Teilborg, retired.

Douglas L. Rayes,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice Frederick J. Martone, retired.

Manish S. Shah,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice Joan Humphrey Lefkow, retired.

John Joseph Tuchi,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice Roslyn Moore-Silver, retired.

Submitted September 23

Bruce Heyman,
of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Canada.

Charles Norman Wiltse Keckler,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2016 (reappointment).

Kathryn B. Thompson,
of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Transportation, vice Robert S. Rivkin, resigned.

Kevin Whitaker,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Colombia.

Submitted September 24

David Jeremiah Barron,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the First Circuit, vice Michael Boudin, retired.

Mark G. Mastroianni,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, vice Michael A. Ponsor, retired.

Indira Talwani,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, vice Mark L. Wolf, retired.

Submitted September 25

Steven Joel Anthony,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Railroad Retirement Board for a term expiring August 28, 2018, vice Jerome F. Kever, term expired.

Susan McCue,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation for a term of 3 years, vice Kenneth Francis Hackett, term expired.

Debra L. Miller,
of Kansas, to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2017, vice Francis Mulvey, term expired.

Catherine Ann Novelli,
of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary of State (Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment), vice Robert D. Hormats, resigned.

Theodore David Chuang,
of Maryland, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Maryland, vice Roger W. Titus, retiring.

George Jarrod Hazel,
of Maryland, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Maryland, vice Alexander Williams, Jr., retired.

Submitted September 30

Dana J. Hyde,
of Maryland, to be Chief Executive Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation, vice Daniel W. Yohannes.

Mark E. Lopes,
of Arizona, to be U.S. Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank for a term of 3 years, vice Gustavo Arnavat, resigned.

Catherine Ann Novelli,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, vice Robert D. Hormats, resigned.

Catherine Ann Novelli,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of 5 years; U.S. Alternate Governor of the Inter-American Development Bank for a term of 5 years, vice Robert D. Hormats, resigned.

Lanhee J. Chen,
of California, to be a member of the Social Security Advisory Board for a term expiring September 30, 2018, vice Mark J. Warshawsky, term expired.

Alan L. Cohen,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Social Security Advisory Board for a term expiring September 30, 2016, vice Dana K. Bilyeu, term expired.

Submitted October 7

Arnold A. Chacon,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Director General of the Foreign Service, vice Linda Thomas-Greenfield, resigned.

Arun Madhavan Kumar,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service, vice Suresh Kumar, resigned.

Daniel Bennett Smith,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Intelligence and Research), vice Philip S. Goldberg.

Helen Tierney,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Kelly R. Welsh,
of Illinois, to be General Counsel of the Department of Commerce, vice Cameron F. Kerry.

Submitted October 9

Janet L. Yellen,
of California, to be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 4 years, vice Ben S. Bernanke, resigned.

Alfredo J. Balsera,
of Florida, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2014, vice Elizabeth F. Bagley, term expired.

Jeh Charles Johnson,
of New Jersey, to be Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Janet Ann Napolitano, resigned.

Withdrawn October 28

Ronald J. Binz,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2018, vice Jon Wellinghoff, term expiring, which was sent to the Senate on June 27, 2013.

Submitted October 30

Robert C. Barber,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iceland.

Nani A. Coloretti,
of California, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Treasury, vice Daniel M. Tangherlini, resigned.

Bathsheba Nell Crocker,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Organization Affairs), vice Esther Brimmer, resigned.

Jonathan Elkind,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (International Affairs), vice David B. Sandalow, resigned.

Mark Gilbert,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to New Zealand.

Joseph S. Hezir,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Energy, vice Steven Jeffrey Isakowitz, resigned.

Tina S. Kaidanow,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank and status of Ambassador at Large, vice Daniel Benjamin, resigned.

William A. LaPlante, Jr.,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice Sue C. Payton.

Theodore Reed Mitchell,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Education, vice Martha J. Kanter.

Massie Ritsch,
of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Communications and Outreach, Department of Education, vice Peter Cunningham.

Charles Hammerman Rivkin,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Economic and Business Affairs), vice Jose W. Fernandez, resigned.

Rhea Sun Suh,
of Colorado, to be Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, vice Thomas L. Strickland, resigned.

Submitted November 7

Colleen Bradley Bell,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Hungary.

Madelyn R. Creedon,
of Indiana, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Neile L. Miller, resigned.

Joseph P. Mohorovic,
of Illinois, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2012, vice Nancy Ann Nord, term expired.

Janice Marion Schneider,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Wilma A. Lewis, resigned.

Joseph William Westphal,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Ellen Dudley Williams,
of Maryland, to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, Department of Energy, vice Arun Majumdar, resigned.

Janet L. Yellen,
of California, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 5 years, vice Ben S. Bernanke, term expired.

James D. Peterson,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Wisconsin, vice John C. Shabaz, retired.

Robin S. Rosenbaum,
of Florida, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, vice Rosemary Barkett, resigned.

Nancy J. Rosenstengel,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Illinois, vice G. Patrick Murphy, retiring.

Kevin W. Techau,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Iowa for the term of 4 years, vice Stephanie M. Rose, resigned.

Ronnie L. White,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri, vice Jean C. Hamilton, retired.

Withdrawn November 7

Ben S. Bernanke,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 5 years (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on April 18, 2013.

Thomas Edgar Wheeler,
of the District of Columbia, to be member of the Federal Communications Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2013, vice Julius Genachowski, which was sent to the Senate on May 9, 2013.

Submitted November 12

Tommy Port Beaudreau,
of Alaska, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Rhea S. Suh.

Thomas A. Burke,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Paul T. Anastas, resigned.

Neil Gregory Kornze,
of Nevada, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management, vice Robert V. Abbey, resigned.

Caroline Diane Krass,
of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, vice Stephen Woolman Preston, resigned.

Ericka M. Miller,
of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, vice Eduardo M. Ochoa.

Stefan M. Selig,
of New York, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, vice Francisco J. Sanchez, resigned.

Submitted November 13

Mark Gilbert,
of the District of Columbia, to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Independent State of Samoa.

Timothy G. Massad,
of Connecticut, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring April 13, 2017, vice Gary Gensler, term expired.

Timothy G. Massad,
of Connecticut, to be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, vice Gary Gensler.

Submitted November 18

Debo P. Adegbile,
of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Thomas E. Perez, resigned.

Marc A. Kastner,
of Massachusetts, to be Director of the Office of Science, Department of Energy, vice William F. Brinkman.

Harry James Franklyn Korrell III,
of Washington, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Mark E. Lopes,
of Arizona, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation for a term expiring September 20, 2016, vice Hector E. Morales, term expired.

Victor B. Maddox,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2016 (reappointment).

Vivek Hallegere Murthy,
of Massachusetts, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualificationstherefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service for a term of 4 years, vice, Regina M. Benjamin, resigned.

Franklin M. Orr, Jr.,
of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy, vice Steven Elliot Koonin.

Submitted November 19

Linda Thomas-Greenfield,
an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation for the remainder of the term expiring September 27, 2015, vice Johnnie Carson.

Submitted November 21

Andrew Mark Luger,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota for the term of 4 years, vice B. Todd Jones, term expired.

Damon Paul Martinez,
of New Mexico, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of New Mexico for the term of 4 years, vice Kenneth J. Gonzales, resigned.

Sherry Moore Trafford,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Natalia Combs Greene, retired.

Steven M. Wellner,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Kaye K. Christian, retired.

Brad R. Carson,
of Oklahoma, to be Under Secretary of the Army, vice Joseph W. Westphal.

Maureen Elizabeth Cormack,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Richard A. Kennedy,
of Pennsylvania, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority for a term expiring May 30, 2016, vice William Cobey, term expired.

Leslie Berger Kiernan,
of Maryland, to be Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform, with the rank of Ambassador.

Leslie Berger Kiernan,
of Maryland, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during her tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform.

Heather L. MacDougall,
of Florida, to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for a term expiring April 27, 2017, vice Horace A. Thompson, term expired.

David Radzanowski,
of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Financial Officer, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, vice Elizabeth M. Robinson.

John Roth,
of Michigan, to be Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security, vice Richard L. Skinner, resigned.

Submitted December 13

Thomas Edgar Rothman,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2016 (new position).

Peter A. Selfridge,
of Minnesota, to be Chief of Protocol, and to have the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service, vice Capricia Penavic Marshall, resigned.

Douglas Alan Silliman,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the State of Kuwait.

Robert A. Wood,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament.

Portia Y. Wu,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Jane Oates.

Submitted December 17

Elisebeth Collins Cook,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a term expiring January 29, 2020 (reappointment).

Submitted December 19

Michael P. Boggs,
of Georgia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, vice Julie E. Carnes.

Julie E. Carnes,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the 11th Circuit, vice James Larry Edmondson, retired.

Tanya S. Chutkan,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice an additional position in accordance with 28 U.S.C. 133(b)(1).

Mark Howard Cohen,
of Georgia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, vice Clarence Cooper, retired.

Gregg Jeffrey Costa,
of Texas, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, vice Fortunato P. Benavides, retired.

M. Hannah Lauck,
of Virginia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, vice James R. Spencer, retiring.

Leigh Martin May,
of Georgia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, vice Beverly B. Martin, elevated.

Eleanor Louise Ross,
of Georgia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, vice Charles A. Pannell, Jr., retired.

Leo T. Sorokin,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, vice Joseph L. Tauro, retired.

James Alan Soto,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice David C. Bury, retired.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released July 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, National Security Council Director for African Affairs Grant T. Harris, and U.S. Trade Representative Michael B. Froman

Text: White House Blog Post: Commonsense Immigration Reform Will Strengthen Social Security

Fact sheet: Trade Africa

Fact sheet: U.S. Efforts To Combat Wildlife Trafficking

Released July 5

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in June

Released July 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Nancy Hogan To Step Down; Jonathan McBride To Serve as Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Personnel

Released July 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released July 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Report: The Economic Benefits of Fixing Our Broken Immigration System

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee vote on employment discrimination prevention legislation

Text: The Economic Benefits of Fixing Our Broken Immigration System

Released July 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Senate Judiciary Committee vote on the nomination of B. Todd Jones to be Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

Released July 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 324, H.R. 1151, and H.R. 2383

Released July 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: Accelerating Improvement in HIV Prevention and Care in the United States Through the HIV Care Continuum Initiative

Released July 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released July 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released July 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 251, H.R. 254, and H.R. 588

Fact sheet: Middle Class Americans Saving Billions Under the Health Care Law's Medical Loss Ratio Refunds

Released July 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released July 21

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the investiture of King Philippe of Belgium

Released July 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released July 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on Rep. Justin Amash's proposed amendment to H.R. 2397, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2014

Fact sheet: Bipartisan Student Loan Deal: A Win for Students

Released July 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Advance text of the President's remarks at Knox College in Galesburg, IL

Released July 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2289

Released July 26

Statement by the Press Secretary on the detention facilities at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

Released July 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: Fixing Our Broken Immigration System: The Economic Benefits to Agriculture and Rural Communities—New Report Released by the White House

Text: Fixing Our Broken Immigration System: The Economic Benefits to Agriculture and Rural Communities

Released July 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: A Better Bargain for the Middle Class: Jobs

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Amazon Chattanooga Fulfillment Center in Chattanooga, TN

Released July 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the advance estimate of GDP for the second quarter of 2013

Released August 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: Executive Order on Improving Chemical Facility Safety and Security

Released August 2

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in July

Released August 4

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Inauguration of Hojjatoleslam Hassan Rouhani as President of Iran

Released August 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: A Better Bargain for the Middle Class: Housing

Released August 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan

Advance text of the President's remarks at Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, AZ

Released August 7

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on the expiration of the ban on imports from Burma

Released August 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Names Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipients

Released August 9

Statement by the Press Secretary: Background on the President's Statement on Reforms to NSA Programs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 267, H.R. 678, H.R. 1092, H.R. 1171, H.R. 1344, H.R. 1911, H.R. 2167, H.R. 2576, and H.R. 2611

Released August 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: The Obama Administration's Work To Honor Our Military Families and Veterans

Released August 11

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on Mexico's release of Rafael Caro Quintero from prison

Released August 13

Statement by the Press Secretary: New White House Report: The Economic Benefits of Providing a Path to Earned Citizenship

Text: Fixing Our Broken Immigration System: The Economic Benefits of Providing a Path to Earned Citizenship

Released August 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest on the situation in Egypt

Released August 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on new Department of Defense initiatives to curb sexual assault in the Armed Forces

Released August 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on World Humanitarian Day

Released August 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released August 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria

Released August 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Fact sheet: President's Plan To Make College More Affordable: A Better Bargain for the Middle Class

Released August 23

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released August 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Nation Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meetings with the Israeli delegation

Released August 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Appoints 2013–2014 Class of White House Fellows

Statement by the Press Secretary on North Korea

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technology

Released August 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: New Executive Actions To Reduce Gun Violence

Released August 30

Transcript of a conference call by senior administration officials on the President's visit to Sweden and Russia

Transcript of a conference call by senior administration officials on the situation in Syria

Text: U.S. Government Assessment of the Syrian Government's Use of Chemical Weapons on August 21, 2013

Text: Map To Accompany the U.S. Government Assessment of the Syrian Government's Use of Chemical Weapons on August 21, 2013

Fact sheet: The United States and Estonia—NATO Allies and Global Partners

Fact sheet: The United States and Latvia—NATO Allies and Global Partners

Fact sheet: The United States and Lithuania—NATO Allies and Global Partners

Released September 4

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate Foreign Relations Committee approval of a resolution authorizing U.S. military action in Syria

Fact sheet: The United States and Sweden—Global Leaders on Clean Energy and Climate Change

Released September 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Released September 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Evan S. Medeiros

Statement by the Press Secretary: United States and China Reach Agreement on Phase Down of HFCs

Statement by the Press Secretary: United States, China, and Leaders of G–20 Countries Announce Historic Progress Toward a Global Phase Down of HFCs

Text: G–20 Leaders' Declaration

Text: St. Petersburg Action Plan

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in August

Fact sheet: The G–20 St. Petersburg Summit

Released September 8

Statement by the Press Secretary congratulating Tokyo on being selected to host the 2020 Summer Olympics

Released September 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser Antony J. Blinken

Statement by the Press Secretary: Establishment of the Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking

Statement by the Press Secretary on additional countries in support of the September 6 Joint Statement on Syria

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice at the New America Foundation

Released September 10

Statement by the Press Secretary on additional countries in support of the September 6 Joint Statement on Syria

Released September 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released September 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released September 15

Text: White House Report—The Financial Crisis: Five Years Later

Released September 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the United Nations report on chemical weapons use in Syria

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the Presidential Determination with respect to Syria

Released September 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the postponement of the state visit of President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil

Released September 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 130, S. 157, S. 256, S. 304, and S. 459

Released September 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released September 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on the President's visit to the United Nations General Assembly

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue (released by the Office of the Vice President)

Released September 21

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the terrorist attack at Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya

Released September 23

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: U.S. Support for Civil Society

Fact sheet: The Equal Futures Partnership To Expand Women's Political and Economic Participation

Released September 24

Transcript of a press briefing by senior administration officials

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official on Iran

Fact sheet: U.S. Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Syrian Crisis

Fact sheet: U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon

Fact sheet: Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Lebanese Host Communities and Refugees From Syria

Advance text of the President's Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly

Released September 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: White House Blog Post: Delivering on the Affordable Care Act: Marketplace Premiums Lower Than Expected

Released September 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches Advanced Manufacturing Partnership Steering Committee "2.0"

Released September 27

Transcript of a background conference call by a senior administration official on Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on the United Kingdom's announcement that it will host the 2014 NATO Summit

Fact sheet: The United States and India—Strategic and Global Partners

Released September 28

Statement by the Press Secretary on the continuing budget resolution passed by the House of Representatives

Released September 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1412, H.R. 3092, and H.R. 3210

Released October 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released October 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 527 and S. 793

Released October 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the cancellation of the President's travel to Asia

Released October 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3233 and S. 1348

Released October 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released October 8

Statement by the Press Secretary on immigration reform legislation

Text: Trans-Pacific Partnership Leaders Statement

Released October 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released October 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 91

Released October 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Fact sheet: Global Entrepreneurship Summit

Released October 12

Statement by the Press Secretary on the need for congressional action to end the Federal Government shutdown and raise the public debt limit

Released October 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3095

Released October 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell on congressional passage of legislation to end the Federal Government shutdown

Released October 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2775

Fact sheet: U.S.-Italy Cooperation

Released October 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released October 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in September

Released October 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: The United States and Pakistan—Strong and Enduring Cooperation

Released October 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released October 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released October 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released October 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by Press Secretary on the death of former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Poland

Released October 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released October 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Announce First-Ever Federal Effort To Attract Job-Creating Foreign Investment to the United States: Expanding and Enhancing SelectUSA

Statement by the Press Secretary: New Report: Foreign Direct Investment in the United States: Report Prepared by the Department of Commerce and the President's Council of Economic Advisers

Statement by Press Secretary on Senate confirmation of Katherine L. Archuleta as Director of the Office of Personnel Management

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3190

Text: Foreign Direct Investment in the United States

Fact sheet: Marking Progress on the Second Anniversary of the Open Government Partnership

Released November 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: U.S.-Iraq Cooperation

Fact sheet: Executive Order on Climate Preparedness: President Obama Establishes a Task Force on Climate

Released November 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate action on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2013

Released November 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released November 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released November 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the advance estimate of GDP for the third quarter of 2013

Released November 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Modernizing and Investing in America's Ports and Infrastructure

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in October

Released November 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released November 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2094

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3302

Text: Statement by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the designation of Boko Haram and Ansaru as foreign terrorist organizations

Released November 14

Fact sheet: New Administration Proposal To Help Consumers Facing Cancellations

Released November 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released November 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the death of former President Glafcos Ioannou Clerides of Cyprus

Text: Readout of Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's call with President Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi of Yemen

Released November 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: U.S. Response to Typhoon Haiyan

Fact sheet: Youth CareerConnect Grants: Building America's Next Generation Workforce

Advance text of remarks by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco at the New York University School of Law in New York City

Released November 20

Statement by the Press Secretary on the elections in Nepal

Text: White House Blog Post by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman: New Report From the Council of Economic Advisers: The Recent Slowdown in Health Care Cost Growth and the Role of the Affordable Care Act

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the United Kingdom's announcement of public financing for alternate energy projects

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice at Georgetown University

Released November 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on Holodomor Remembrance Day

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 247, S. 330, and S. 893

Text: White House Blog Post: Improving Information—New Letters Make Health Insurance Choices Clear

Released November 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: U.S.-Morocco Strong and Enduring Commitment

Text: Joint Statement on the Inaugural Meeting of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Group on Threats to and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the Context of International Security

Released November 23

Fact sheet: First Step Understandings Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program

Advance text of the President's remarks on Iran

Released November 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on the first step agreement on Iran's nuclear program

Released November 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text: Readout of National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

Released November 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: New Report: Supporting Families, Strengthening Communities—The Economic Importance of Nutrition Assistance

Statement by the Press Secretary on the 2007 disappearance of retired FBI agent Robert Levinson in Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on the pending Supreme Court case *Sebelius* v. *Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*

Text: Supporting Families, Strengthening Communities: The Economic Importance of Nutrition Assistance

Released November 27

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1848, H.R. 3204, and S. 252

Released November 29

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Presidential Determination Pursuant to Section

1245(d)(4)(B) and (C) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the United Arab Emirate's selection as host of the 2020 World Expo

Released December 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1545

Fact sheet: Shared Responsibility To Strengthen Results for an AIDS-Free Generation

Released December 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: The United States and Colombia—Strategic Partners

Fact sheet: The President's Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice at the Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Congressional Breakfast

Released December 4

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Leadership on International Human Rights

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice at the Human Rights First Annual Summit

Released December 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: New Report: The Economic Benefits of Extending Unemployment Insurance

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Central African Republic

Text: Report by the Council of Economic Advisers and the Department of Labor: The Economic Benefits of Extending Unemployment Insurance

Text: Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the death of former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa

Fact sheet: Presidential Memorandum on Federal Leadership on Energy Management

Fact sheet: Attracting Manufacturing Investment in American Communities

Released December 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in November

Released December 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3626

Released December 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the completion of the U.S.-Russia "Megatons to Megawatts" program

Advance text of the President's remarks at the memorial service for former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa

Released December 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released December 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013

Statement by the Press Secretary on Iowa's expansion of Medicaid under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on peace efforts in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa

Text: White House Blog Post: Answering the Call on Cell Phone Unlocking

Released December 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released December 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released December 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released December 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: President's Meeting With the Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies

Text: Liberty and Security in a Changing World: Report and Recommendations of the President's Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies

Released December 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Releases New National and State Reports Showing the Costs of Repealing the Health Care Law

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Grants Commutations and Pardons

Statement by the Press Secretary on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014

Text: This Is The Affordable Care Act (National Report)

Text: This Is The Affordable Care Act (State Reports)

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the U.S-Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbon Agreement

Text: White House Blog Post by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman: The Economy in 2013

Fact sheet: U.S. Assistance to the Central African Republic

Released December 20

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Honors Outstanding Math and Science Teachers

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 185, H.R. 1402, H.R. 2251, H.R. 2871, H.R. 2922, H.R. 3458, H.R. 3588, and S. 1471

Released December 23

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Honors Outstanding Early-Career Scientists

Statement by the Press Secretary on the ongoing air assaults by the Syrian Government

Released December 26

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3304

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 59, H.R. 623, H.R. 767, H.R. 2319, H.R. 3343, and H.R. 3487

Released December 27

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the U.S-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Joint Report

Text: Statement by National Economic Council Director Eugene B. Sperling on the need for congressional action to extend emergency unemployment benefits

Released December 29

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the all-party talks in Northern Ireland

Released December 30

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the terrorist attacks in Volgograd, Russia

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the National Maritime Domain Awareness Plan

Text: National Maritime Domain Awareness Plan for the National Strategy for Maritime Security

Released December 31

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the all-party talks in Northern Ireland

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the situation in South Sudan

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register*

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. *The texts of the documents are printed in the* Federal Register *(F.R.) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the* Code of Federal Regulations *and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.*

PROCLAMATIONS

Proc. No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
8998	July 19	Captive Nations Week, 2013	44869
8999	July 25	Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 2013	46243
9000	July 25	National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, 2013	46245
9001	July 25	World Hepatitis Day, 2013	46247
9002	Aug. 9	National Health Center Week, 2013	49357
9003	Aug. 23	Women's Equality Day, 2013	53233
9004	Aug. 23	50th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom	53235
9005	Aug. 30	National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, 2013	54735
9006	Aug. 30	National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, 2013	54737
9007	Aug. 30	National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, 2013	54739
9008	Aug. 30	National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, 2013	54741
9009	Aug. 30	National Preparedness Month, 2013	54743
9010	Aug. 30	National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, 2013	54745
9011	Aug. 30	National Wilderness Month, 2013	54747
9012	Aug. 30	Labor Day, 2013	54749
9013	Sept. 6	National Grandparents Day, 2013	56123
9014	Sept. 6	National Days of Prayer and Remembrance, 2013	56125
9015	Sept. 10	Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance, 2013	56809
9016	Sept. 13	National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2013	57461
9017	Sept. 13	National Farm Safety and Health Week, 2013	57463
9018	Sept. 13	National Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week, 2013	57465
9019	Sept. 16	Constitution Day and Citzenship Day, Constitution Week, 2013	57779
9020	Sept. 16	Honoring the Victims of the Tragedy at the Washington Navy Yard	57781
9021	Sept. 19	National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 2013	58865
9022	Sept. 20	National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, 2013	59155

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
9023	Sept. 20	National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 2013	59157
9024	Sept. 26	National Public Lands Day, 2013	60177
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